

Inspection of Balcombe CofE Controlled Primary School

London Road, Balcombe, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH17 6HS

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 April 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils know that staff understand their needs and look out for them. This helps pupils to feel happy and safe at this caring school. Staff build strong relationships with pupils and their families, starting from the moment they know that pupils are going to attend the school.

Pupils demonstrate exceptional behaviour and attitudes throughout the school. Instances of unkind actions, including bullying, are very rare. There are procedures for what to do if it occurs. Pupils trust the adults who look after them to deal with anything that might happen. They demonstrate respect for each other, the adults, and for people of all kinds. Pupils all know and demonstrate the expectations of behaviour and remind each other of how they behave in this school.

All at the school are highly ambitious for pupils. Leaders ensure that pupils have the right curriculum that helps them learn well. With these aspirations and careful planning, no pupil is left behind and, as a result, they attain well.

Leaders ensure that pupils learn about their place in the wider community. The school is very active and pupils have many opportunities to get involved in community events. This helps them to learn what it means to be a good citizen.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have planned an ambitious curriculum for all pupils, from the early years onwards. They set out clear intentions which ensure that all ages of pupils learn what they need to regardless of the mixed-age classes. Leaders are developing the subjects on a rolling programme, ensuring that appropriate time is spent on each in turn. Subjects which have been developed are very effective, showing well-planned, sequenced and effective learning activities. But there are a small number of foundation subjects that still need this work, and are not yet as strong. Linked to this, assessment is strong in core subjects and in early years. However, there are still a small number of foundation subjects for which is it not yet as embedded as others.

Reading is a strength of the school and is taught soon after children arrive in Reception. The curriculum ensures that pupils gain knowledge and skills to be confident readers. Pupils quickly develop a love of reading. They talk confidently about books and make recommendations to friends and classmates. As a result, pupils attain extremely well. Pupils who find reading difficult or who fall behind are given support which enables them to become confident and fluent readers.

Pupils are exceptionally and consistently well behaved. Children in early years play extremely well together and their classroom is a joyous place to learn. Pupils across the school are attentive and engaged. Staff make effective curriculum decisions, including using the outdoor facilities and grounds to teach parts of the curriculum. Pupils display extremely positive attitudes to their learning.

Leaders plan pupils' personal development carefully and deliberately. Leaders ensure that the school makes good use of offers of support and opportunities from the local community. These experiences ensure that visitors to the school and trips out enhance the learning for the pupils. Pupils have chances to take on responsibilities or join clubs to broaden their experiences and develop talents. The personal, social, health and economic education curriculum supports pupils well in learning how to keep themselves safe physically, emotionally, mentally and online. It also teaches them about financial matters and incorporates teaching of the school's relationships and sex education programme at an age-appropriate level.

The support that staff give to disadvantaged pupils or those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is based on swift identification of need, strong relationships with parents and carers, access to outside services, and a range of in-school support. All staff identify needs as they arise, and support begins at this point. For the youngest children, this can be before they start school. The support is designed not to disrupt their regular class learning and to close any gaps between pupils and their peers. The school also supports families to access help outside school.

The leaders have everybody's well-being at heart: pupils, staff and parents. The relationship between the governing body, leaders and staff is very strong. The staff are well established and all feel valued. The benefits of the strong relationships that the school develops with the families should not be underestimated. Governors are very effective in holding the school to account but also in supporting it and being part of the continual development. The school leaders are determined in their approach to ensure the pupils get the very best from the school and all it has to offer. Pupils and parents feel that they do this well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a culture of safeguarding running through the school. Staff know and understand the pupils and their needs well. Staff are continually trained in keeping pupils safe. Leaders keep careful records and work with other agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

All parents who answered the survey said the school keeps their children safe. Pupils feel safe because they know that staff care.

All checks are carried out in school for people who work or visit the school, and governors regularly monitor and audit provision and practice.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A minority of foundation subjects are not as well planned or as secure as the others. As a result, staff do not have enough guidance with which to teach the complete curriculum. Leaders need to continue to implement their plans to develop all subjects so they are all of an equally high standard.
- Assessment is not yet embedded in some foundation subjects. This means teachers cannot build securely on pupils' prior learning because they do not have a clear picture of what that is. Leaders need to ensure good-quality assessments are made in all foundation subjects.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	126006
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10256379
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	136
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Ian Tremble
Headteacher	Wendy Millbanks
Website	www.balcombeschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 October 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a Church of England school within the Diocese of Chichester. The last statutory inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools was in February 2023.
- The school does not currently make use of any alternative provision.
- The school provides its own breakfast and after-school club.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, assistant headteachers, subject leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. They met with members of the governing body. They also met with the diocese improvement partner and the school's senior education adviser for the local authority.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. They also listened to some pupils read.
- Other subjects, such as physical education, and art and design, were also considered as part of this inspection.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents, including those related to safeguarding, attendance, pupils' personal development and behaviour. The views of parents and staff were also considered, including through Ofsted's surveys and by speaking with parents and carers on the school gate. Pupils' views were also considered and pupils were spoken with throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors considered the effectiveness of safeguarding through discussions with leaders, teachers, support staff and pupils. They looked at records relating to safeguarding, including pre-employment checks on staff.

Inspection team

Kate Owbridge, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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