

Blacko Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119167
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	379743
Inspection dates	5–6 January 2012
Lead inspector	Sarah Drake

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	90
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tom Root
Headteacher	Mark Harrison
Date of previous school inspection	19 November 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Sarah Drake

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed six lessons taught by five different teachers. She also observed part of a one-to-one special support session plus a group of sessions promoting the understanding of the links between letters and sounds. The inspector also listened to individual pupils read. The inspector held meetings with pupils, members of staff, and the Chair of the Governing Body. She observed the school's work and scrutinised examples of pupils' work, as well as documentation relating to pupils' achievement and school management. The inspector also took into account the questionnaires completed by pupils, school staff and 53 parents and carers.

Information about the school

Blacko is less than half the size of an average primary school. It serves a settled, rural village community to the north of Nelson, plus a minority of families who live in the wider surrounding area. The overwhelming majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress, have been exceeded during the past three years. The school holds the Eco-School Bronze award, the Learning Excellence award and the Healthy School award.

A privately run out-of-school club operates on the school site. The setting did not form part of this inspection but a report on its quality can be found on the Ofsted website.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
 Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school that continues to provide good quality education for its pupils. The provision to promote pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and their behaviour and safety are now outstanding. Pupils have a mature understanding of risk, are polite, thoughtful and collaborate exceptionally well. Parents and carers are delighted with the school’s provision and they provide it with good levels of support. Pupils describe it as ‘amazing, friendly and fun’.
- Children get off to an excellent start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils achieve well throughout Key Stages 1 and 2, generally reaching above average attainment levels. Writing is a significant strength throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs and pupils with disabilities often achieve exceptionally well. Others, especially those of higher ability, make good progress but a small number are capable of even better.
- Teaching is of good or better quality, characterised by interesting activities and good relationships, organisation and pace. In the Reception class, the teaching establishes clear routines and expectations that underpin the enthusiastic, positive attitudes to learning that pupils demonstrate across the school. Teaching assistants provide effective support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Lessons are carefully planned and pupils’ progress is regularly assessed but there is not enough precision about what different groups are expected to achieve or their next steps for improvement.
- Good quality leadership and management have built an effective staff team. The school runs smoothly and provides a highly supportive environment for learning. Members of the governing body are well informed about the school’s strengths and areas for improvement. Partnerships enhance the quality of provision. As yet, development planning and the system for tracking pupils’ progress are not used to best effect to ensure all pupils reach their full potential.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rate of progress made by pupils, particularly those of higher ability, by:
 - ensuring that lesson planning clearly identifies different success criteria for those of different ability, and that these are shared with pupils
 - enhancing the effectiveness of marking
 - improving the analysis of pupils' developing reading skills, and using the information to adapt the provision.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that whole-school and subject development-planning has clear, measurable success criteria relating to pupils' progress
 - making better use of the tracking system to identify those pupils who could be moved on at a faster rate.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers are accurate in their unanimous opinion that their children make good progress at Blacko. Children's attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is consistently well above average. For the past three years 100% of children have been working securely within the expected outcomes in all areas of learning and the great majority have exceeded them. This represents excellent achievement given that children generally join the Reception class with the range of skills expected for their age. Children listen well, are keen to volunteer their ideas, work sensibly, for example when measuring and pouring water into a bucket, and are happy to negotiate, such as when building with large bricks.

Elsewhere, attainment in English and mathematics is above average. The difference between pupils' attainment in this school and that of pupils nationally is consistently more positive in writing than in reading. Pupils take great care with the content and presentation of their work, thinking hard about, for example, how to increase the writing's impact through choice of words and varied sentence length. The reading skills of pupils at the end of both key stages are above average overall; however, some younger pupils struggle to put their understanding of the links between letters and sounds into practice so as to increase their confidence and fluency, or to help them decode instructions in lessons. In general, pupils use their communication and mathematical skills with facility across the curriculum so that they leave the school well prepared for the next stage of their education. This includes such skills as note-making, building on others' ideas, evaluating the quality of their efforts, and using information and communication technology (ICT) to research and present their work.

Pupils with special educational needs and pupils with disabilities regularly attain levels above those of similar pupils nationally. In 2011, in response to a range of support strategies both in and out of the classroom, this group of pupils achieved exceptionally well in English to reach above the national average for all pupils. In

general, pupils' achievement is good but a small number of higher ability pupils, in particular, are capable of making even better progress in lessons, especially when they have clear success criteria to guide them.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is usually of good or better quality. It enthuses pupils to think about what they are doing and to try hard. This is because activities are interesting and often link the learning in different subjects. Lessons progress at a good pace and relationships are very strong. Teachers make good use of questioning to help pupils develop and explain their thinking, and interactive whiteboards as visual aids. In a session in the Reception classroom, children and older pupils eagerly responded with sounds and actions to the well-paced changing letters displayed on the whiteboard. This allowed the teacher to assess individuals' accuracy and make very well-targeted comments to move forward their understanding of the links between letters and sounds. The analysis of pupils' early reading skills is not always so precise, with comments in individuals' records often generalised rather than containing rigorous identification of areas to improve. Similarly, marking is supportive but not always used to best effect, either because it does not give clear pointers for improvement or because, when these are included, pupils are not always expected to respond to queries or complete corrections.

Detailed planning outlines the tasks that pupils of different ability should undertake and teachers always share the learning objective of lessons. Teaching assistants provide effective support for those with special educational needs and pupils with disabilities. However, neither in their planning nor in lessons is it the norm for teachers to highlight with clarity what different groups are expected to learn in order to optimise their progress. In one lesson based on a poem, older pupils purposefully built on their prior work using drama to develop their understanding of the characters before creating their own narrative of the story line. In the following lesson, where the success criteria for those of different ability were precisely outlined, pupils made even better progress as more-able pupils focused closely on writing convincingly from two points of view whilst others concentrated on use of similes or finding different words to describe characters' feelings.

Pupils describe their lessons as fun and give many examples of how games and other activities have helped them to learn easily and consolidate their skills. Regular use of talking partners and group-work creates a strong sense of community and promotes pupils' tolerance and understanding of others' needs. Parents and carers are unanimous in their view that their children are taught well at the school.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils say that they feel very safe in school. They, and their parents and carers, also say that instances of bullying are exceptionally rare. All those spoken with said that they felt confident to approach staff with any concerns, and that unkind behaviour of any sort is dealt with quickly and effectively. They describe the school as 'friendly because everyone lets you join in'. Pupils of different ages clearly explained what steps to take to avoid risk inside and out of school and, both in lessons and the playground, independently acted in ways to avoid accidents.

Pupils' outstanding behaviour and consistently high attendance levels make a very strong contribution to their good achievement. Lessons run without interruption because pupils understand the fairness of taking turns and they treat each other with courtesy and respect. They move around in a calm, orderly manner, listen well to their teachers and each other, and settle very well to work. Pupils respond very positively to staff's positive and consistent behaviour management so that, for example, very little time is spent when reorganising pupils into different groups or when some pupils leave for, or return from, extra support sessions. Pupils consider the school is highly successful at helping those who find it hard to behave well all the time to improve their self-discipline. Older pupils act as very effective 'watchers', efficiently helping others to sort out minor spats. By the time they leave for the next stage of their education pupils have developed a zest for learning and the mature personal skills necessary for successful learning in the future.

Leadership and management

Senior leaders, including members of the governing body, have a clear and ambitious vision for the school which is shared by all staff. Pupils' attainment in writing has risen since the previous inspection as has their awareness of their targets for improvement. Leaders have taken decisive steps to improve the quality of teaching both through performance management and by ensuring that staff have good access to further training. Such improvements indicate the school's continuing good capacity to improve further.

The headteacher's weekly discussions with small groups of pupils about their work provide him with detailed knowledge of their progress and what is happening in classrooms. Regular monitoring and analysis of individuals' progress lead to effective action to support those who are struggling but, as yet, the tracking system does not identify all of those who could be offered more challenge. Improvement planning is firmly based on evaluation of pupils' attainment and progress but does not identify criteria related to their achievement through which to evaluate the impact of any actions. Similarly, the recorded observations of lessons focus more on the teaching strategies used than the impact of these on pupils' learning.

All pupils have equal opportunities to be included in activities and the support provided for those who have special educational needs and pupils with disabilities is helping to narrow the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. They are regularly reviewed and staff training is up-to-date. The curriculum is good and is enhanced well through themed weeks, visits, visitors and a wide range of extra-curricular activities. It promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well, as confirmed by parental and carers' comments such as, 'it provides numerous opportunities to develop academically, socially, physically, creatively and emotionally'. Through partnerships and joint activities with the local network of schools, as well as developing links with the Gambia, pupils are deepening their understanding of diversity in the United Kingdom and the global community. Effective management and administration mean that the school runs very smoothly, even when partially flooded as was the case during the inspection.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupil's work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the children's attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



9 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blacko Primary School, Nelson, BB9 6LS

Thank you for your friendliness when I visited your school recently. Particular thanks to those of you who gave up some of your lunchtime to talk with me. Your views and those in the questionnaire helped me to understand what it is like to be a pupil at Blacko. My purpose in visiting your school was to find out at first-hand how well you are doing in your work and what the leaders could do to make the school even better. Yours is a good school. Here are some of the reasons why.

Children in Reception get off to a really good start and make rapid progress. You achieve well through the rest of the school so that attainment is above average by the end of Year 6. Your writing is well above average. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make particularly good progress in English. Achievement is good because your behaviour and attendance are excellent and the teaching is of good quality. Teachers give you interesting things to do and lots of support, as well as good opportunities to think things through for yourselves. I have asked the school's leaders to help you make even better progress, particularly those of you who find learning easy, by making sure that you are clear not only about what you should *do* but also about what your teachers expect you to *learn* in lessons and what you should *do next to improve*. You can help with this by doing your corrections and replying to the comments that teachers make when they mark your work.

The leaders lead the school well. They make sure that it runs smoothly and keeps on improving. It is good that you can regularly discuss your views about your learning with the headteacher. I have asked the school's leaders to make sure that when they are planning actions, they have a clear idea of what impact they hope these will have on your learning, and that they review the success of the actions by analysing your, hopefully improved, progress.

I hope that you continue to enjoy learning and school life as much as you do now.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Drake
Lead Inspector

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