

Blackmore Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114929
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	357650
Inspection dates	14–15 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Graham Preston

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	139
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Snelling
Headteacher	Karen Gibbons
Date of previous school inspection	18 March 2008
School address	Nine Ashes Road Blackmore, Ingatestone CM4 0QR
Telephone number	01277 821528
Fax number	01277 821394
Email address	admin@blackmore.essex.sch.uk

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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed five

- teachers in 12 lessons. Meetings were held with governors, groups of pupils and
- staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including that relating to safeguarding practices and the school's self-evaluation and development planning. They also considered the questionnaire responses from 69 parents and carers and 70 pupils

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

The extent to which the school tracking and other data indicate that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress over their time in school particularly in Years 3 to 6.

- How well teachers provide sufficiently challenging learning experiences in the mixed age classes.
- The progress made to improve outcomes and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The impact of the recent changes in school leadership.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average primary school. It draws pupils from Blackmore village and the surrounding area. Most pupils are of White British heritage and none are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The proportion of pupils who join the school at times other than expected is relatively high in some years. The school has the Healthy Schools award and the Activemark sports award.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Blackmore is a good school. The recently appointed headteacher works closely with the very strong governing body to maintain the school's strengths in providing a caring and supportive learning environment while endeavouring to further improve standards and pupils' progress.

Pupils start in Year 1 with knowledge and skills expected for their age and make good progress during their time in school. Strong learning support ensures that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do as well as their peers. The higher than average number of pupils who join the school in later years are well supported and at least reach their expected targets by the time they leave.

The new school leadership provided an opportunity for all to strengthen and reaffirm the positive school ethos. This has successfully sustained many of the strengths identified in the last inspection. Pupils' attendance is well above that nationally and changes in the school curriculum have considerably enhanced pupils' learning experience with all parents and carers agreeing that their children enjoy coming to school. Pupils are encouraged to be thoughtful, cooperative and considerate and show a concern for others. Consequently, behaviour is almost always exemplary and all parents and pupils confirm they feel very safe and well supported. The school council is particularly active in promoting healthy lifestyles and this commitment is reflected in the high up take of the healthy school lunches and the participation of all pupils in swimming and many other active sports. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is strong and positive progress is being made through the curriculum and links with schools elsewhere to further strengthen their awareness of the wider British society.

Teaching is good in Years 1 to 6 helped by staff readiness to share good practice in lesson planning. Consequently, pupils know what they are expected to learn in a lesson and there are sufficiently varied activities to ensure effective learning for the different ages and abilities in each class. Teachers are well informed and successfully engage pupils' interest and commitment to learning. The additional learning support is particularly good, though on occasion, whole class teaching takes too long and reduces time for planned group work and best use of teaching assistants. Marking is regular and positive with a good focus on correcting English. The school uses good tracking systems that record National Curriculum levels for pupils' progress; however, most marking does not show pupils how to improve in terms of these levels.

The curriculum has been improved to both strengthen provision for literacy and numeracy and provide interesting project based activities that encourage pupils to actively research and problem solve. The wide range of extra-curricular activities considerably enhances pupils' learning experience.

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Care, guidance and support, praised in the last report, continues to be outstanding. The high quality tracking of pupils' progress and readiness to meet their needs are praised by parents whose children have special educational needs and/or disabilities, as well as those whose children who have transferred from other schools. The high standards of child protection and support are reflected in the very effective work with children whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

The school is well led by a recently appointed headteacher well supported by senior leaders and other staff. Significant improvements in terms of teaching and the curriculum are helping raise standards while efforts to promote the school in the wider community are increasing the school intake. Considerable progress has also been made to communicate with parents and carers and to develop strong partnership links that enhance pupils' learning. Work is in progress to improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage but this has yet to significantly impact on outcomes. The governing body is exceptionally well informed and has a very clear view of how they want the school to develop and improve. Governors work very closely with the headteacher and staff, regularly evaluating the school's provision and participating in the planning of its development. The successful appointment of an ambitious and effective headteacher, a committed staff increasingly involved in school development and evident progress in outcomes and provision, indicate good value for money and good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Involve pupils and parents and carers more fully in the drive to improve pupils' progress by:
 - improving marking and linking pupils' learning targets more explicitly to National Curriculum levels used in the school's tracking so that pupils have clearer goals for improvement
 - providing parents and carers with regular information of pupils' progress and showing them how homework supports their children's learning.
- Improve provision for Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - providing a wider and more engaging range of learning activities to help promote curiosity and sustain concentration
 - increase resources and facilities in the outside learning area to enhance exploration and experimentation.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children make satisfactory progress in Reception and start Year 1 with skills broadly expected for their age. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 consistently make good progress and attain above average standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 2. In 2010, the majority of Year 6 pupils also made good progress despite that year containing a considerable number of later arriving pupils including a number with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This resulted in a fall in overall standards to be a little above the national average. However, given the low starting points of those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, all made good progress in terms of their academic

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and social development helped by the school's strong learning support. Standards of the current Year 6 pupils are significantly higher with most on target to exceed expected levels by the end of the year. These above-average standards were evident in a Y6 mathematics lesson where pupils understood and accurately calculated different forms of average and the more able were able to apply them to frequency distribution curves. Exceptionally good progress was seen in a Year 1/2 lesson where pupils were confidently producing sequences of odd and even numbers.

Pupils respond very well in assemblies and class discussions with a readiness to contribute ideas and listen to others. They have a strong moral and social sense evident in their active commitment to healthy lifestyles where they help plan the school lunch menus and run a fruit stall to support a charity. The school's excellent work was recognised in the Essex Healthy Eating Gold Award. Pupils demonstrate considerable maturity through a variety of activities including being Young Leaders to younger pupils, participating in staff interviews, raising substantial amounts for different charities, being involved in local road safety surveys and supporting various church and village events. As part of the school's strategy for cultural development pupils have links with a French school and two urban schools in Britain as well as supporting a charity in Kenya.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good, based effectively on positive relationships between teachers and pupils, secure subject knowledge and consistently good learning support. Lessons are mostly well planned, although some teachers are better than others at allowing time at the end of a lesson to reinforce the main learning points and check that pupils have made progress. Teachers make good use of the electronic whiteboard, and plan interesting and purposeful activities that sufficiently challenge all pupils.

These activities include greater use of larger projects like the Egyptians which provide good opportunities to incorporate literacy and numeracy and enable pupils to use information and communication technology (ICT) for research both in lessons and at home. This move to a more topic based, creative curriculum has contributed well to pupils' enjoyment and independence. The school benefits from its links with the local sports partnership as well as a number local sports clubs that run sessions before and after school. Links with the local secondary schools also help challenge more-able pupils through 'Master classes' in mathematics, science and ICT.

Excellent safeguarding arrangements, and monitoring and support for vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are key strengths recognised by parents and carers as well as pupils. The school's inclusive ethos is also reflected in the well-established personal, social and health education (PSHE) and the strengths of experienced teaching and non-teaching staff in identifying and reporting any concerns.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has had a positive impact on recent school improvement and, with her two senior colleagues, provided effective models of good practice in teaching and learning. Staff are playing a greater part in leadership and management through their roles as subject leaders and as collaborative pairs, sharing improved practice. Governance is outstanding because of a very well informed governing body drawn from parents and the local community which regularly reviews outcomes and provisions and sets challenging targets. This is well illustrated in the outstanding safeguarding arrangements which are monitored rigorously and have led to major improvements in security fencing and very clear policies disseminated to parents, carers and pupils regarding internet safety and child protection. Governors and staff regularly monitor and evaluate school performance using the school self-evaluation form as a tool for improvement.

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Although some parents would like to be better informed of their children's progress, in many other respects the school makes considerable efforts to better engage them. This includes daily contact with teachers, a detailed website, 'parentmail' parental surveys and newsletters. There is virtually full attendance of parents at sharing assemblies, open days and parents' evenings and considerable participation in shared school lunches and end of week 'reading with pupils' sessions.

Community cohesion has been carefully evaluated and improved resulting in links with France and Kenya, strong community ties and curriculum development. There are joint activities with two other primary schools in Britain and strategies to further promote engagement with schools and groups at national level are underway.

Partnerships are strong, evident in the close links with the pre-school groups which have aided pupil transition and increased school intake. The school also contributes to the local schools consortium to access and share good practice. Regular liaison with the local social agencies supports the school in its effective work with pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

The promotion of equal opportunities is well supported by the school's tracking systems for groups and individuals. These ensure that staff have a thorough knowledge of all their pupils and are sensitive to their needs especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

This is an area of provision that the school is working to improve and overall effectiveness is currently satisfactory.

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Children enter Reception with knowledge and skills broadly in line with those expected for their age. Appropriately planned learning activities, including use of phonics (how letters relate to the sounds in words) to develop communication and literacy; now enable children to enter Year 1 with standards which are broadly average. Children who attend for only part of the time miss valuable learning opportunities and the school is working to ensure the group makes sufficient progress. As the children develop they steadily gain in confidence and become more actively involved in choosing their learning activities. Children are settled and are increasingly independent for example, in putting on coats or preparing for an art activity. They are able to concentrate well though some lose interest when the adult led activity does not fully engage them. They maintain good relationships with adults and each other, and behave very well.

The resources provided cover the six learning areas though some of the planned learning activities lack clear focus and variety, particularly outside. There is an appropriate balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities though these do not consistently stimulate and extend the children. Outside areas provide sound opportunities for children to develop their physical skills. Assessment is regular and increasingly involves support staff as well as the teacher. 'Learning Journeys' are used well to show progress made including observations and photographic evidence.

Early Years Foundation Stage leadership has a number of strengths including ensuring smooth transition from the pre-schools using 'Transition Passports'. Strong partnerships exist with parents and carers to keep them fully informed and involved. For example, parents and carers are encouraged to contribute comment on children's 'Learning Journey' folders and participate in the weekly reading sessions. Children are kept very safe both inside and outside. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader and headteacher are working closely together to identify good practice elsewhere. However, there is a recognition that there is insufficient variety, focus and challenge in teacher led and pupil initiated learning activities to ensure children make good progress

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The great majority of parents and carers are positive about the school and all agree that their children enjoy school and that the school keeps their children safe. A few express concern about mixed-age classes providing sufficiently challenging learning for all pupils. Inspectors observed that teachers were mostly successful in meeting the different needs of pupils in those classes. The school now makes considerable effort to engage parents and keep them informed. However, some parents feel less well informed about their

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children's progress and inspectors have asked the school to provide regular and more detailed information of pupils' progress in terms of National Curriculum levels.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Blackmore Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 69 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 139 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	42	61	27	39	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	50	72	19	28	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	25	36	36	52	8	12	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	52	28	41	2	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	34	49	30	43	4	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	36	52	30	43	2	3	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	46	67	22	32	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	28	41	31	45	4	6	2	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	35	51	29	42	4	6	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	26	38	36	52	4	6	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	51	27	39	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	43	62	23	33	3	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	41	59	27	39	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

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.



16 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blackmore Primary School, Ingatestone, CM4 0QR

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. It gives you a good education, and ensures that most of you achieve well by the time you leave. The school makes considerable effort to ensure you are safe and we were pleased to see that you behave very well and work together in lessons. We were very impressed with what the school is doing to help you develop healthy lifestyles and how well you have responded. You told us how you appreciated helping to decide the school meals which won the Essex Gold Award for healthy lunches and more of you have lunch than in most other schools. You all swim and most get involved in different sports and it is good to see that you chose to have a fruit (rather than cakes) stall in order to raise funds for a charity.

All of your parents and carers told us how much you enjoy school and you certainly show this in your lessons and excellent attendance. You get on well with your teachers and support staff. They plan different projects and activities that make your learning interesting as well as helping you to make good progress. However, only a minority of you know the next steps you need to make to improve your National Curriculum levels in reading, writing and mathematics. We have asked the school to use those levels in your classwork books and homework. This will also help your parents and carers better understand your progress and how they can help you. We have also asked the school to help children in the Reception class make better progress in developing their knowledge and skills so they are better prepared for Year 1.

The headteacher, the governing body and all the staff are working hard to further improve your school. You can all help by working hard, keeping up your excellent attendance and continuing to take an active part in the life of the school.

Yours sincerely

Graham Preston
Lead Inspector

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