

The Bluecoat School, Stamford

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120399
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	358756
Inspection dates	3–4 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Tim Bristow HMI

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Willoughby-Ellis
Headteacher	Timothy Howley
Date of previous school inspection	31 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed seven teachers and visited 15 lessons. They held meetings with representatives from partner agencies, governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan, assessment information, lesson plans, school policies and questionnaires from 62 parents and carers, 74 pupils and 13 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- Is the attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 average, as maintained by the school, when national results indicate that it appears to be low overall?
- How effective is care, guidance and support, judged by the school to be outstanding, and the partnerships with other agencies?
- Has the Early Years Foundation Stage maintained its outstanding overall effectiveness since the last inspection?
- How successful have school leaders been in driving improvements to the curriculum and teaching and learning?

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average sized primary school. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or who have a statement of special educational needs is well above average. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and from homes where English is not the first language is below average.

Pupils benefit from an extended schools partnership with other local schools. The school is classed as a 'Change School' which means that it is one of three in Lincolnshire benefitting from the Arts Council's Creative Partnerships programme introduced in 2008. The school shares the site with a Children's Centre that is managed by the local authority and is subject to separate inspection arrangements.

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

The school provides pupils with a good education. The headteacher, ably supported by staff and governors, has successfully established a school with a strong reputation for inclusion and creativity which it richly deserves. Children benefit from an excellent start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is evident that pupils then continue to thoroughly enjoy their education because of the extremely exciting curriculum and the very high quality of care, guidance and support they receive.

Overall, the achievement of pupils is good. By the time they leave Year 6 the attainment of all groups is in line. An improvement to the teaching of phonics and writing has had a strong impact on the achievement of children and pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. They now make outstanding progress and standards at the end of Year 2 in English, mathematics and the humanities are rising strongly. Progress at Key Stage 2 is good, but the impact of improvements has yet to accelerate progress at the same rate as the rest of the school. This is because there remains some inconsistency in marking and setting targets for pupils, and pupil progress meetings at Key Stage 2 do not always capitalise on the opportunity to identify how progress could be accelerated even more.

Teaching is good overall, but it is outstanding in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 6. A strong feature is that in most lessons teachers demonstrate that they are able to pitch the work accurately to meet the needs of nearly all pupils, which accounts for the good quality of learning. Middle leaders do not always ensure that outstanding practice is shared widely across the school, so that others can benefit from it. The curriculum has much strength. For example, the excellent range of enriching, creative and extra-curricular activities has resulted in pupils demonstrating high standards in their work in art, design and technology, information and communication technology, music and physical education. The curriculum has very successfully fostered pupils' outstanding development of a healthy lifestyle. They very enthusiastically take part in the daily opportunities to exercise and develop sports skills.

One of the outstanding features of care, guidance and support are the excellent partnerships that have been established with local agencies. This has resulted in the school very successfully meeting the often complex needs of nearly all pupils. One result of this is the good and often outstanding behaviour of pupils. The expert management of a significant group of pupils with challenging behaviour, including a few that were admitted because they were in danger of exclusion from other schools, results in them making good progress in lessons.

The determination of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and the governing body to give all pupils the best chance of success in their education is exemplary. This ambition, combined with robust procedures to check the work of the school and good self-

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evaluation, is the reason for the successful improvements in provision. Improvements, in particular in the curriculum and teaching of reading and writing, have ensured the excellent equality of opportunity for all groups of pupils. Consequently, the school demonstrates good capacity for improvement. The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding and appreciation of different cultures within school, but there are too few opportunities provided by the school to promote community cohesion beyond its boundaries.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the rate of progress from good to outstanding at Key Stage 2 so that standards rise further by:
 - sharing the existing outstanding teaching in school
 - further improve the consistency of marking and the use of targets
 - further strengthening pupil progress meetings with staff to raise expectations of what all pupils can do and achieve.
- Improve the promotion of community cohesion by providing more opportunities for pupils to meet people who represent a wider range of groups in British society.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

The large proportions of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, which has exceeded 60% in Year 6 in the last two years, result in attainment appearing to be low overall, which is inaccurate. National results and school information demonstrate that every year, in English and mathematics, the attainment of all groups of pupils is in line or better than average when compared to similar groups nationally. School information shows that all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress, and for a few it is outstanding.

In lessons pupils demonstrate good behaviour, independence and creativity in their work. For example, in a Year 2 English lesson in preparation for writing, pupils worked extremely well together on a drama activity where they developed an understanding of the characters in Cinderella. They also demonstrate very good cooperation skills and perseverance when solving problems. For example, in an outstanding mathematics lesson in Years 5 and 6, pupils worked together with great enthusiasm on an investigation that developed their understanding of probability and data at a fast pace.

Pupils' spiritual development is outstanding for their age. For example, during the inspection, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage were spellbound as they watched chicks hatching from their eggs. A tangible sense of respect for each other has been established through the excellent assemblies led by the headteacher. Pupils report that they feel safe in school and that there are few cases of bullying. All the parents and carers who returned a questionnaire agree with this. Pupils are secure in the knowledge that there is always someone to help them if needed. Pupils make a good contribution to the community. For example, they recently organised a Hallowe'en disco where they were raising money for charity. Older pupils take their responsibilities to younger pupils seriously through activities such as paired reading. Pupils' good achievement, combined

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with well developed social and information and communication technology skills, means that they are well prepared for the future. Attendance is average and improving.

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	3
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	3
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

How effective is the provision?

In lessons, teachers and teaching assistants have very good relationships with pupils. Planning is of a consistently good standard and uses assessment information well to plan work for different groups of pupils. Marking and the use of targets is used well to accelerate progress and pupils report confidently that they know the next steps they need to take to improve their learning in most lessons. However, in the few lessons where teaching is satisfactory marking is less effective in giving advice on improvements.

Some of the art work displayed in the school is of a very high quality. One reason for this is that the school has fostered excellent partnerships with professional artists to develop pupils' skills. Another very productive partnership that has improved the curriculum are the high quality music lessons provided for Key Stage 2 pupils by the local authority's peripatetic musicians. Nearly all these pupils are learning to play a musical instrument. A successful feature of the well established creative curriculum is the excellent opportunities for pupils to practice their literacy skills imaginatively in other subjects. For example, a group of pupils created a very good electronic advertisement for a fictional holiday demonstrating good research, writing, oral and information and communication technology skills.

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All pupils are extremely well cared for because of the expertise the school demonstrates in tailoring provision to meet the needs of all individuals. This is particularly the case for the significant group of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. However, it is also the case for the very small proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. For example, one parent reported great appreciation of the school's success in enabling her child quickly to become fluent in English. The support, enhanced by extremely productive partnerships, for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is rarely short of excellent. One strong feature of these partnerships is the school's ability to assess and determine need swiftly. As one parent reported, representing the views of others, 'My child gets all the help he needs, plus more'.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

School leaders demonstrate that when they are determined to make improvements they are highly effective, such as the acceleration in progress from entry to the end of Key Stage 1. While middle leaders are regularly involved in checking the work of the school, the role of some, in leading improvement, is not sufficiently well developed. For example, the outstanding teaching in Year 6 has not been fully shared with others so that teachers can learn from it and make improvements to their own practice. School leaders regularly hold staff to account for the progress of their pupils through activities such as the progress meetings held each term which has contributed to the consistently good progress they make. However, these do not always sufficiently raise the expectations of what pupils can do and achieve in Key Stage 2.

The school struggles to recruit governors. Nevertheless, the governing body demonstrates a dynamic overview of the strategic development of the school. There are a number of examples that demonstrate that governors robustly hold the school and its leaders to account for its work. While the governing body carries out all its statutory duties adequately, some procedures, such as the regular review of policies, are not as efficient as they could be.

All the parents and carers who responded by questionnaire are happy overall with the work of the school. One of the successes of the school has been to engage some families who are hard to reach. The excellent extended schools partnership makes a major contribution to the progress and well being of pupils. For example, the partnership's parent advisor regularly works expertly with groups of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable, developing their safety awareness and mental well-being. The children's centre and school are successfully developing productive partnerships to further support

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children, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage. At the time of the inspection the impact of these was not yet evident.

The rigorous procedures for monitoring the progress and provision for all pupils have been instrumental in ensuring the great success of their equality of opportunity. The school acts swiftly and effectively to ensure that any change in circumstances that pupils may experience has the minimum of impact on their progress. Procedures to safeguard pupils, ably managed by the bursar, are currently robust and effective.

Pupils demonstrate a growing appreciation of other cultures through topics like the exciting India project currently taking place in Year 1. However, they have little experience of the diversity and richness of British society because the opportunities for them to develop this are limited.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Nearly all children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skill development, in communication, language and literacy, personal and social education and numeracy that is well below expectations. Every year they develop skills very rapidly so that by the time they enter Year 1 nearly all have either achieved the early learning goals or are much closer to doing so.

This is because of the outstanding range of activities that are expertly tailored to meet the needs of each child. The highly skilled teachers and teaching assistants rarely miss an opportunity to further develop the skills of individual children when they are taking part in activities. For example, staff expertly exploited the opportunity presented by bonfire night to develop the language skills of Nursery age children. Children were encouraged to

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describe the sounds of fireworks; they then tried to replicate them on musical instruments while observations of their progress were recorded for assessment and planning.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is rightfully held in high regard locally. As one parent reported, 'All the staff are fantastic, the facilities are great. My child is very happy and has progressed in all areas. I cannot recommend it highly enough.' This is largely due to the outstanding leadership of the deputy headteacher who has a very successful track record of driving forward improvements to provision so that children make outstanding progress.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

An extremely strong feature of the views of parents and carers is their almost unanimous support of the work of the school. Very few concerns were raised. There were no apparent trends to these concerns, nor did inspectors find evidence to support them. However, they were pointed out to the school leaders.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Bluecoat School, Stamford 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 62 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 202 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	41	66	18	29	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	51	82	11	18	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	35	56	24	39	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	55	28	45	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	41	66	21	34	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	60	22	35	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	58	24	39	1	2	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)	40	65	20	32	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	58	24	39	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	52	27	44	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	50	27	44	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	41	66	20	32	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	48	77	14	23	0	0	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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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.



5 November 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of The Bluecoat School, Stamford, PE9 1HE

If you remember, I came with my colleagues to inspect the work of the school and to check how well you were doing. Thank you for the help you gave us, we found you to be very polite and knowledgeable about the work of the school. Your views were very helpful to us as we carried out the inspection. I am very pleased to report that we think that you are doing well. You can be very proud of the good and outstanding progress you are making. We think that because of this your behaviour is good, even for the few of you who find this hard. You work very well together in groups and are developing into independent and creative individuals. We thought that your art work was fantastic; in fact the whole school looks lovely, because of the good quality of your work which was displayed. It was really great to see how much you enjoyed taking part in daily exercise. It was impressive to see that some of you take part in physical activities sometimes three times a day.

We think that you go to a good school where you are very well cared for and where the headteacher and staff try extremely hard to make your lessons and other activities exciting and interesting.

In order to help you do even better we have asked the school to make some improvements to the lessons and marking for older pupils so that you make even faster progress. We have also asked the school to try and organise more opportunities for you to learn more about the rich variety of British society.

You can help by ensuring that you all come to school every day.

Yours sincerely

Tim Bristow

Her Majesty's Inspector

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