

# Blackmarston School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117052
<b>Local Authority</b>	Herefordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	358069
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 February 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael Farrell

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	66
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sian Bailey
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 May 2008
<b>School address</b>	Honddu Close Hereford HR2 7NX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01432 272376
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed 12 lessons and 10 teachers and held meetings with groups of pupils, parents and carers, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and scrutinised a range of evidence including the school development plan, pupils' work, data for pupils' progress and 39 parental and carer questionnaires.

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

- The team considered the relative progress of pupils in different groups including different year groups and how effectively data is used to raise standards.
- It looked at the effectiveness of transition arrangements and the degree to which pupils are encouraged to make best choices.
- It explored the rigour of the management process of monitoring and evaluating teaching and the strategies to improve teaching.
- It considered also the effectiveness of the assessment procedures and practices in the Early Years Foundation Stage and how well the school uses children's progress data in this phase to raise standards.

## Information about the school

Blackmarston School is of average size for a special school of this type. It educates pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and severe learning difficulties. It provides also for pupils with additional complex needs, including autism and challenging behaviours. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Nearly all are White British. The school has a high percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. Children do not always remain at the school after the Early Years Foundation Stage and many pupils are admitted to the school in Key Stages 1 or 2. The school has gained national Healthy Schools status and Activemark, Eco-School and International School Awards.

**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

Blackmarston is a good school. In the outstandingly well led and managed Early Years Foundation Stage, the excellent provision leads to outstanding outcomes for the children. Accurate assessment information is used exceptionally well to inform subsequent lessons and to plan ambitious activities that raise children's achievement.

First-rate arrangements for transition into the school, from one class to another and for the move to secondary school help to ensure that pupils are carefully supported. Parents, carers and other partners are all involved in ensuring that any necessary changes are made as clear as possible to the pupils. Pupils feel exceptionally safe because the arrangements to ensure this are very thorough, staff have established a secure, calm ethos, and pupils trust adults greatly to keep them safe. Pupils strive exceptionally well to be healthy through healthy eating, exercise and participating fully in therapy and treatment. They contribute fully to the school council and house groups as well as to the wider community. For example, they have enthusiastically helped to design supermarket bags and raise funds for charities. Attendance is good, despite some pupils' hospitalisation or illness.

The broad and balanced curriculum is matched closely to pupils' individual needs and adjusted if any groups are found to be progressing less well than their peers. Excellent extra-curricular opportunities contribute very strongly to pupils' outstanding social and moral development. Pupils respond very well to a wide range of opportunities to engage with different cultures. However, curriculum activities are not always sufficiently practical and related to daily life and, where this is the case, pupils are less engaged with the activities.

Pupils in all year groups from Key Stage 1 onwards learn and progress well and enjoy school a good deal. This is because relationships between adults and pupils are very strong. The atmosphere in lessons is warm and positive and teachers assess pupils' learning accurately. Lessons enable the pupils to make choices and develop their independence well. Teaching assistants contribute well when they are fully deployed, however, teachers do not always ensure this. Just occasionally, lessons include too many different aims so that pupils' progress is slowed and the focus is unclear.

Data are used well to check pupils' progress and ensure that the curriculum meets their changing needs. Leaders monitor teaching regularly and thoroughly and provide teachers with helpful feedback and written guidance to show them how to improve. Ambition is well embedded and, through its focused and practical self-evaluation, the school has a clear sense of direction which is supported by a deeply committed staff team. Consequently, the school has a good capacity to improve further.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers always deploy teaching assistants fully and that lessons do not have too many conflicting learning objectives.
- Ensure curriculum planning always includes practical activities related to daily life.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Achievement is outstanding in the Early Years Foundation Stage and all groups in Key Stages 1 and 2 learn and progress well because the teaching is good. Pupils in Key Stage 1 make slightly stronger progress than those in Key Stage 2 because some of the pupils in Key Stage 2 are new to the school and are settling in. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make slightly better progress than those with severe learning difficulties or autism because the school provides daily special focus-groups for these pupils, which is helping to raise their achievement. This is shown in pupils' individual records including annotated photographic evidence as well as in the data the school is using with increasing effectiveness. In a good mathematics, lesson, enabling children to match objects, pupils made good progress because symbols and signs were used well to encourage communication and independence and computer technology was deployed well to capture pupils' interest. In a good literacy lesson involving taking turns in a story, pupils made good progress because they were encouraged by the very good relationships and had ample opportunities to make choices. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make good progress.

Reflecting the school's Activemark and national Healthy Schools status, pupils respond exceptionally well to healthy living opportunities, which have a striking impact on individuals, for example in beneficial weight loss and dramatically increased confidence. They enjoy school greatly. Even though from time to time some pupils exhibit challenging behaviour, pupils behave well in lessons and around the school because adults' expectations are clear and consistent. Pupils are exceptionally keen to participate in activities and contribute to the school community and doing so raises their confidence greatly, for example they show great pride in their roles representing the school houses. In the wider community, too, pupils' contribution is very much valued. For example, they formed a choir to perform at a wedding in the local community. Workplace and other skills are well developed because of the good contribution of basic skills and opportunities to carry out activities together. Pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident in their greatly increased sense of self-worth and their animated participation in a very wide range of cultural activities from Chinese New Year to listening to a visiting story teller.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

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

\* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching is based on warm, respectful relationships and skilled and patient support for pupils' learning. Lessons start punctually and pupils are keen to participate. Signing and symbols are used well to aid communication. Assessment is thorough and carefully recorded outcomes are used to inform subsequent planning. Teachers question pupils well to clarify what they have learned. Teaching assistants contribute effectively when working with individuals or small groups. At times, when teachers do not deploy teaching assistants fully and their role is less clear, this slows the lesson pace. Just occasionally, teachers try to cover too many learning aims, clouding the main purpose of the lesson and slowing progress.

The broad curriculum meets the diverse needs of pupils well, including the growing number who have challenging behaviour. It is thoughtfully modified as necessary. For example, when data indicated that pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties were not progressing as well as their peers, the school developed daily focused sessions only for these pupils to rectify this. The excellent range of popular extra-curricular activities includes lunchtime and after-school clubs, visits, visitors, holiday clubs, family play days and a dance festival. Many activities are colourful and interesting and capture

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pupils' interest. Sometimes, however, activities are not as practical or connected to daily life as they should be, reducing the relevance to pupils' learning.

Exceptional targeted support and very strong partnership with other agencies ensure that each pupil receives very high-quality care, guidance and support. Teachers and therapists work seamlessly together to ensure pupils' learning and development are supported exceptionally well. Parents and carers feel very well supported by the high-quality care provided and they are also kept very well informed about their children's progress. Pupils' work and progress is tracked very carefully so that the school is able to intervene in a timely fashion if individuals are not doing as well as they should. The school does everything that can be reasonably expected to ensure pupils attend as regularly as possible.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## **How effective are leadership and management?**

Leaders and managers embed ambition well through clear development planning and by ensuring a strong sense of purpose throughout the school. Well-considered self-evaluation gives the school an accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses so that staff know the priorities and can pull together. The governing body enjoys a membership with a wide range of skills and supports and challenges the school well, for example by reviewing safeguarding procedures vigorously. Safeguarding is paramount and enormous care goes into ensuring the procedures and practices, including risk assessments, are extremely thorough. Parents and carers are involved exceptionally well because the school recognises the vital importance of close partnership with them and devotes considerable time to making this a reality.

Partnerships with others including the health services and social services make a strong contribution to pupils' good progress and very good personal outcomes. Equal opportunities are promoted well because staff members treat each pupil as an individual and strive to ensure they all do their best. Any signs of discrimination are tackled so that the school is a harmonious place. Excellent promotion of community cohesion is underpinned by a thorough audit of the context in which the school works and practical, carefully monitored plans. The school provides good value for money.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Early Years Foundation Stage

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make outstanding progress and are constantly enabled to be more independent and make choices for themselves. Relationships are exceptionally strong, supporting children to be very well behaved and thoroughly engaged in their learning. High-quality assessment through careful observation is exceptionally rigorous. All staff members have an excellent understanding of how children with complex needs make progress. Children are given access to a very suitable curriculum full of fun activities which motivates and engages them extremely well. Expectations are very high and these, together with rigorous organisation, lead to an outstanding match between the provision and children's needs. Very strong partnerships contribute significantly to the excellent outcomes.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
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



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## **Views of parents and carers**

There was a high level of response to the parental and carer questionnaire. All parents and carers agreed that their children enjoy school, that the school informs them of their children's progress and helps them support their learning at home. For all the remaining statements, the vast majority agreed with them. This very positive picture was reflected in discussions with parents and carers, who were enormously appreciative of all the school does. The inspection evidence endorsed these very positive views.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Blackmarston 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 39 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 66 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	87	4	10	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	34	87	4	10	1	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	29	74	10	26	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	72	10	26	0	0	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	30	77	8	21	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	79	8	21	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	74	9	23	1	3	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)	29	74	8	21	0	0	1	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	84	4	10	0	0	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	77	8	21	0	0	1	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	77	8	21	0	0	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	33	85	4	10	0	0	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	87	3	8	0	0	1	3

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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



7 February 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Blackmarston School, Hereford, HR2 7NX**

Thank you for making my colleague and me welcome when we inspected your school recently. You told us how much you like what the school offers, such as the very wide range of extra activities. Those of you who completed the questionnaire and those who spoke to us were very clear that you enjoy school and all the things that happen there.

Blackmarston is a good school. Here are some of the good things about it.

The youngest children have excellent things to do.

The care you receive is excellent so that you develop very well, feel really safe and trust the adults who work with you.

Teaching is good so you learn well.

Your activities are interesting and are changed when necessary.

The school is well led and managed.

There are two things the school could do better, so I have asked the headteacher to:

- make sure teachers organise lessons so teaching assistants work with you for the maximum amount of time, and that you do not have too many things to learn in one lesson
- make sure your activities are practical and relate to daily life.

I am sure that you will help the school to improve by continuing to work hard in your lessons. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Farrell

Lead inspector

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