

Blackford CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112300
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	357080
Inspection dates	12–13 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Sue Sharkey

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	50
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Dorothea MacKay
Headteacher	Mrs Linda Smith
Date of previous school inspection	18 September 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited five lessons and observed three teachers. Meetings were held with the acting headteacher, pupils, representatives of the governing body and staff. The inspector observed pupils' work and looked at the school's systems for tracking pupils' progress, safeguarding documents and key policies. Inspection questionnaires from 34 parents and carers, nine school staff and 23 pupils were also taken into account.

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

- Whether the more-able pupils are sufficiently challenged in lessons.
- The effectiveness of strategies used to raise pupils' achievement in English at Key Stages 1 and 2.
- The effectiveness of the monitoring carried out by leaders on the school's performance.
- Whether curriculum planning in the Early Years Foundation Stage enables the full use of both the indoor and the outdoor environment.

Information about the school

This is a much smaller than average size primary school serving a wide area in a rural community. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. Pupils are usually taught in three classes: Reception with Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4, and Years 5 and 6. The number of pupils in each year group is often less than 10 and can be as low as four.

An independent provider runs a playgroup on the school site and this is subject to a separate inspection. There have been significant unexpected changes in staffing recently. An acting headteacher was appointed in September 2010. The school has the Activemark 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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Blackford Church of England Primary School provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. The school places a strong emphasis on pupils' personal development and this is reflected in the good behaviour, confidence and politeness shown by pupils. Pupils say they feel safe. They enjoy school and are keen to work hard in lessons. The acting headteacher has quickly settled into her new role and is well supported by staff and the governing body. Parents and carers are positive in their comments about the school's work, a typical comment being, 'I can't praise the school enough for the help and support it gives to pupils and parents. The school is a welcoming and safe place for our children.'

Children enjoy learning from the time they start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Here, they are nurtured and cared for in a safe environment and make satisfactory progress. Opportunities for teachers to plan daily outdoor play activities which include the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum are restricted because there is a lack of suitable outdoor space accessible from the classroom. As a result, the daily planning for outdoor play does not include a wide enough range of activities. Over recent years attainment has fallen and is now broadly average in English and mathematics, reflecting satisfactory progress and achievement across Key Stages 1 and 2. Too few pupils attain the higher levels expected of them for their age.

The curriculum is satisfactory; it engages pupils' interest and includes an opportunity for older pupils to enjoy taking part in residential activities. These help to raise pupils' awareness of different people's needs and life experiences, helping to ensure that they are soundly equipped for their future life. Teachers use a range of learning styles to meet the different needs of pupils, although sometimes tasks lack sufficient challenge to extend the most-able pupils. Lessons have a positive climate, good relationships and a strong sense of purpose but there is not always sufficient space in classrooms to ensure that all pupils can be fully involved. During lessons, teachers inform pupils well of their progress but this does not extend to the marking of pupils' work so that they always know the next steps in their learning. Teachers are beginning to plan work so that different subjects are linked together, but there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their reading skills in order to help improve their writing throughout the curriculum.

The new acting headteacher has quickly put in place a number of systems to raise achievement and already there are clear signs that pupils' progress is accelerating and their attainment is rising. School self-evaluation is becoming more robust with governors and staff now contributing to the process. Leaders are correctly identifying the strengths and weaknesses in the school with increasing confidence. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and improve achievement, particularly in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that the most-able pupils are sufficiently challenged so that they achieve higher levels
 - developing pupils' reading skills further in order to improve writing across the curriculum
 - ensuring that the marking of pupils' work always helps them to know the next steps in their learning.
- Improve outdoor learning experiences for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - improving the quality of the outdoor play spaces
 - ensuring teachers plan sufficient opportunities for children to regularly take part in a wider range of activities outdoors.
- Ensure that pupils can always be fully involved in their learning by making sure
- there is adequate space in classrooms.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted Inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Overall, children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills broadly as expected for their age and make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in their Reception Year. Although there is evidence of some good learning, pupils' overall progress through Key Stages 1 and 2 is satisfactory. By the time they leave school in Year 6, pupils' attainment is broadly in line with the national average. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from additional support, as well as tasks that meet their needs well, ensuring that they make satisfactory progress. The school has recently introduced a range of strategies to raise pupils' achievement. It is too early yet to see the full impact of these but there are indications that some of these are beginning to be successful in accelerating pupils' progress. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise their reading skills in order to stimulate writing throughout the curriculum.

Pupils say that they enjoy learning because teachers make lessons fun but there is not always enough space in classrooms to enable all pupils to fully engage in their learning. Years 1 and 2 pupils were excited when they were looking at the properties of shapes. They confidently read the number of sides and corners described and drew what they considered to be the right shape. Pupils laughed at some of their own drawings but when challenged were able to share ideas and identify the correct shape. Questioning helped to extend learning so that some pupils were able to explore different kinds of triangles. In another class, Years 5 and 6 pupils were eager to write after they had been discussing short sentences to stimulate ideas for their story writing. Pupils know and understand their targets. They say that they are helpful in encouraging them to improve their work.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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The school council makes a positive contribution to improving the school community and develops a good understanding of citizenship. They are pleased with their initiative to develop the wild area in the playground. Pupils enjoy taking part in community events, particularly raising funds for local, national and international charities or sending parcels to their pen friends in a school in Malawi. Pupils' overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy through regular exercise and good diet. The programme for physical education includes a wide range of after-school activities including gymnastics, cricket and gardening. Attendance is satisfactory and improving.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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?

Teaching is satisfactory overall but there examples of good teaching, as seen during the inspection. Where teaching is good, activities are well planned and teachers set a good pace which motivates and engages pupils well. Teachers' expectations are high and discussions are lively. However, work is not always challenging enough to extend learning for the more-able pupils. Teachers know their pupils well and the good support of teaching assistants means adults often work effectively with pupils in very small groups. Marking is regular and positive in tone, but does not always help pupils understand their next steps in learning.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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The curriculum satisfactorily meets the needs of pupils. Subject leaders are making changes in the way the curriculum is planned in order to emphasise links between subjects, to create meaningful opportunities for learning and for pupils to apply their skills to new situations but, as yet, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to practice their reading skills. Visits and visitors complement classroom work and pupils are enthusiastic about their experiences, talking about how they enjoy visits to a local theatre or taking part in African drumming.

The care that pupils receive is reflected in the way that adults respond to pupils' worries and cater for any minor incidents around school and in the playground. Pupils know that their concerns are listened to, that adults care for them and will always help them. The school works with a range of agencies to support pupil's needs, including those with additional learning needs. The school has a satisfactory range of strategies in place to raise attendance and is developing these further as it works more closely with parents.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteacher sets a clear direction for school improvement. She has already put systems in place to evaluate the school, to improve provision and to ensure that pupils receive regular assessment so that their progress can be carefully tracked. Some effective actions have already been taken and this is reflected, for instance, in improvements to the quality of teaching. The governing body provides satisfactory support and challenge and is aware that attainment and pupils' achievement are a high priority. Policies and procedures for safeguarding are satisfactory and all current government requirements are met. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily and is taking action to provide pupils with more opportunities to meet with other children from different cultures in the wider community. Links with outside agencies are effective in supporting the curriculum and enhancing pupils' personal development. Provision to secure equal opportunities for pupils is satisfactory and the school has effective systems in place for tackling any form of discrimination. The partnership with parents is good, most parents feel well informed and involved in their children's learning.

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

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children settle quickly into routines, playing well together and sharing. Good parental involvement helps to ease children happily into school life and induction processes ensure that children are already familiar with the school surroundings. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with a range of skills, which can vary from year to year, but for many this is broadly in line with what is expected for their age and often lower in calculation and writing. The indoor curriculum is well planned, with the limited resources that are available, to support early learning. However, the outdoor areas available are not all easily accessible nor do they provide opportunities to include all aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum on a regular basis. Relationships are good and children benefit through group activities and working alongside the older pupils in the same class, as they are often able to share tasks. All adults take every opportunity to initiate conversation with children and teaching assistants play an important role in this. Throughout the Reception Year children make satisfactory progress so that by the time they reach Year 1 most children have achieved the early learning goals expected and some exceed. Children behave well and enjoy working together. For example, a visit to the vets helps to ensure that their pets are well cared for as well as an opportunity to work out the problem of how they can bandage the sore trunk of an elephant at the zoo. Leadership and management are satisfactory and all welfare requirements are met.

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

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 overwhelming majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire are positive about the way the school cares for and educates their children. They feel that their children enjoy school, are kept safe and are pleased with their children's progress. Some took time to add comments to the questionnaire they returned, many to reinforce the strength of their positive views, which inspection findings support. A very small minority of parents and carers raised some concern about the school informing them of their children's progress. The inspector investigated this during the course of the inspection and found that new procedures are now in place with a view to providing parents with more regular information about their children's progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Blackford CofE 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 inspector received 34 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 50 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	68	11	32	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	26	76	7	21	1	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	19	56	11	32	4	12	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	44	19	56	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	20	59	14	41	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	44	17	50	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	41	18	53	2	6	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)	11	32	18	53	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	41	20	59	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	47	13	38	2	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	50	14	41	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	17	50	16	47	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	22	65	12	35	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.



14 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blackford CofE Primary School, Carlisle, CA6 4ES

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking with you and watching you learn in lessons. I was pleased with how well you understand the importance of keeping healthy. I thought your behaviour was also good and congratulate you for raising money for charity and helping your community and your friends in Malawi. Overall, I found that your school provides you with a satisfactory education and that your acting headteacher and the school staff are making changes to the curriculum to help you learn even more.

There are some things that we have asked the school to do to help to make it better.

First, for teachers to challenge you more in lessons so that some of you can achieve higher levels in English and mathematics. Second, I have asked teachers to mark your work differently so that they can add comments that will help you to know what you need to learn next. Third, that you have opportunities to develop your reading in order to help you improve writing in different areas of the curriculum. Fourth, that they check that you all have enough space in your classrooms to help you learn, and lastly, that the Reception children have better opportunities to learn through play outdoors.

I am really pleased that you said that you enjoy coming to school. Remember to always do your best and help your teachers. Thank you for helping me and for being so polite.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Sue Sharkey

Lead inspector

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