

Blowers Green Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103771
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	355454
Inspection dates	14–15 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Judith Tolley

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	259
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Raggett
Headteacher	Surinder Sehmbi
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 11 teachers in 18 lessons; held meetings with parents and carers, groups of pupils, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, the analysis of pupils' progress, 128 pupil questionnaires and 94 parental/carer questionnaires.

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

- Whether the progress of pupils is at least satisfactory in Key Stages 1 and 2, especially in English and mathematics, as judged by the school.
- Whether the leadership and management are effective at all levels in contributing to the school's capacity to improve further.
- Whether the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved since the school was last inspected and whether outcomes are at least satisfactory.

Information about the school

The school is larger than the average primary school. The large majority of pupils come from minority ethnic groups, mainly Pakistani, and speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is much higher than average. The school holds a number of national awards, including Leading Parent Partnership Award and Activemark and has the Healthy Schools status. Since the last inspection, the school experienced a short period of temporary leadership. The current headteacher was appointed in January 2008.

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

2

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school which is improving rapidly and securely. As a result of accurate self-evaluation and prompt, very well-targeted action, the sharp decline in attainment since the last inspection is being tackled successfully and the legacy of underachievement is being addressed. Attainment is now broadly average. Pupils' progress, while remaining satisfactory overall, is improving strongly in English, and pupils' achievement has improved consistently over the last two years; however progress is less rapid in mathematics. The pupils display good attributes and attitudes in their personal development. The school has many strengths, not least the good levels of pastoral care and support given to its pupils, the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the outstanding partnership it has forged with parents and carers. This is largely the result of the leadership and direction provided by the headteacher. She has effectively secured the support and enthusiasm of staff who demonstrate a clear commitment to delivering improvement. The focus on improving pupils' numeracy and literacy, particularly pupils' speaking and listening skills, together with the improved use of assessment to support learning, is proving effective in raising attainment. The rigorous analysis of pupils' progress and the subsequent provision of support, tailored to individuals' needs, are increasingly helping the pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, to quicken the pace of their learning. The pupils are closing gaps in their learning. Most are now on track to achieve, and some to exceed, their targets in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6.

The curriculum meets pupils' needs and interests adequately. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. It is improving as a result of some effective procedures to spread best practice and to provide professional development, tailored to meet the individual needs of the teachers. There are examples of outstanding teaching but the quality varies across the school. Where teaching is weaker, activities are over-directed by the teacher, limiting opportunities for the pupils to explore ideas for themselves, individually or in groups. In some lessons, assessment information is not used well enough to inform tasks which challenge pupils across the ability range.

In providing very clear direction and support to achieve improvements, the headteacher has won the confidence of the staff, parents and carers and pupils alike. The governing body is well informed, very supportive and increasingly involved in the life of the school. The significant and rapid improvements in pupils' attainment and progress, the accurate identification of strengths and areas for development, and the involvement of all the staff in school self-evaluation and improvement planning processes are indications of the school's good capacity to improve further.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment in mathematics by:
 - ensuring good practice is shared and applied consistently throughout the school
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to practise their numeracy and literacy skills more widely across the curriculum.
 - Use assessment information more consistently to plan effective lessons which match pupils' abilities and provide suitable challenge.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to explore ideas for themselves through working independently and collaboratively in lessons.
- Up to 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

Attainment declined sharply in English, mathematics and science in 2008. Standards improved slightly in 2009 and significantly in 2010 in Key Stages 1 and 2. Work seen during the inspection indicates that this trend of improvement continues. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 has improved and is now broadly average. Pupils are successfully closing previous gaps in their learning. Attainment on entry to Key Stage 1 is broadly in line with national averages. Progress has improved at Key Stage 1 and is good, as a result of the well-focused support for individual pupils and the improved use of assessment to target support. At Key Stage 2, progress is satisfactory. Across the school, progress in mathematics, although satisfactory, is slower than in English. Across the school, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress.

The pupils' positive attitudes towards learning and their good behaviour are major factors in raising their achievement. The pupils say they enjoy school and this is reflected in their improving attendance. In lessons, they respond enthusiastically when they are given the opportunities to work together to solve problems. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, for instance, the pupils responded enthusiastically to the challenge of explaining what a variety of graphs might represent. They had lively discussions about this in small groups and, as a result, were keen to share their ideas with the rest of the class. The pupils enjoy thoroughly activities which involve them all, for example, working in teams in oral story-telling activities. On these occasions, they work together very effectively and organise themselves well. The pupils usually display high levels of concentration, although it lapses occasionally when they are unsure about how to complete a task or when they are not directly involved in activities.

The pupils say that they feel safe and know who they can go to if they have a problem. They are confident that issues such as rare cases of bullying are addressed promptly and effectively. The pupils have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Extra-curricular activities, including physical exercise, are well supported. The pupils make a good contribution to the school and the wider community through the school council, by taking responsibility as playground helpers and by fund-raising, as well as through involvement in local community projects such as the 'pony sculpture'. They display respect

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for one another and their teachers, take time to reflect on their own actions and have a good sense of right and wrong. They have a good understanding of their own culture and the multicultural diversity of society. The pupils' rapidly improving literacy and numeracy skills, their good attitudes to learning and their ability to work with others make a satisfactory contribution to their preparation for their future lives.

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	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?

The teachers have high expectations of behaviour; the pupils respond well and relationships are good. Support in lessons, for individuals and small groups, is effective in enabling the pupils to make up lost ground and to achieve satisfactorily. The teachers usually present new ideas clearly and they and the teaching assistants use questioning to good effect to support and challenge the pupils, both in whole-class discussions and during class work. Activities are usually well sequenced, so that pupils build effectively on previous learning. Marking is usually of good quality and gives the pupils good guidance about how to improve their work. The pupils know their targets and are beginning to evaluate their own progress, although this is at an early stage of development.

In some lessons, the teachers give the pupils good opportunities to discuss ideas with a partner, thus consolidating their learning well. In other lessons, the teachers do not give the pupils sufficient time to explore ideas for themselves or to work independently. In a few lessons, the pace slows and the pupils become restless when teacher-led activities are

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too lengthy or when they are not directly involved. In some mathematics lessons, the planning is not always precise enough so that some pupils find tasks too difficult.

The curriculum meets the pupils' needs and interests adequately. The school's emphasis on the development of core skills in literacy and numeracy is raising standards across the school. The oral story-telling lessons are having a strong impact not only on the pupils' speaking and listening skills, but also on their enjoyment of reading and the quality of their writing. The teaching of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is under-developed. The school is aware of this and has plans which are at an early stage of implementation.

Provision is good for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those who speak English as an additional language. Support is outstanding for pupils whose circumstances mean they need additional support. Clearly targeted support for groups of potentially needy pupils has resulted in significant improvement in their attitudes, behaviour, achievement and relationships. Good links with partner institutions ensure that the pupils make a smooth transition to high schools and well thought out induction procedures ensure that they settle quickly when they begin school. The school works very effectively with a range of external agencies, as well as parents and carers, to remove barriers to learning. The breakfast club is well attended and the pupils say they enjoy the opportunity to take part in the activities and talk to each other before school begins.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's thorough analysis of the school's performance, the very clear direction for development that she and the senior leadership team have set and the action taken are proving effective in accelerating pupils' progress, eliminating weaknesses, and providing an atmosphere in which achievement is valued and celebrated. Pupils' progress is tracked closely and this informs school improvement planning. The middle leaders play a full part in evaluating the school's performance and in school improvement planning, but many are still adjusting to their roles. The senior leadership team acted swiftly to address weaknesses in teaching and learning, particularly in reading and writing. Training and mentoring have been effective in improving the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Standards rose in the last two years and gaps between the progress of different groups, evident in 2008, are closing. This sustained and secure improvement, together with the pupils' high participation rates in the wide variety of extra-curricular and other activities the school provides, are indications that equality of opportunity is promoted appropriately.

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The governing body discharges its responsibilities appropriately and the school works closely with other institutions, such as high schools, to enhance pupils' experiences. The school is highly successful in engaging with parents and carers, who say they value greatly the efforts the school makes to support their children and to involve them in their children's learning, for example, through the school's website, newsletters, parents' evenings and workshops. Safeguarding procedures are applied rigorously and are kept under constant review. Risk assessments and checks on adults working in the school are extremely thorough. The school's work with parents and carers, partner institutions and the local community is promoting community cohesion well. The pupils increase their understanding of the wider community through, for instance, their study of French, the celebration of religious festivals, and a variety of visits and visitors.

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills levels, knowledge and understanding that are often low in relation to those expected for their age. All of the children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress in most areas of learning. By the end of the Reception Year, the majority of children attain in line with national expectations. The adults take every opportunity to engage the children in conversation about their work and their play. As a result, language and communication skills and personal and social development are particularly well developed. The focus on social and emotional development enables the children to develop a positive attitude to learning and to work and play happily together. The children make choices from a broad range of activities and work independently, for instance, in art and craft activities. Although many children begin the Nursery speaking little or no English, by the time they reach the

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Reception class, they are able to express themselves clearly and accurately. This represents excellent progress from their starting points.

A stimulating and well-equipped learning environment engages the children well. The staff are deployed effectively to support children's learning. Observations and assessments inform day-to-day planning and the children's next steps in learning well. When activities are adult-led, this is done with enthusiasm, for instance in mixing paint colours and singing songs. Induction procedures, informal meetings and 'stay and play' sessions lead to very effective partnerships with parents and carers and ensure that the children settle in quickly and feel secure. The Early Years Foundation Stage manager leads an enthusiastic team who work together with a common sense of purpose. Transition arrangements from the Nursery to the Reception Class are effective. Good safeguarding procedures ensure that children are protected and well looked after.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A higher-than-average proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. The very large majority have positive views of the school. They are pleased with the progress their children make and say their children enjoy school. A small minority of those who responded expressed concerns about the way the school deals with unacceptable behaviour and the extent to which the school takes account of parents' and carers' suggestions and concerns. The inspectors found that the school dealt promptly with unacceptable behaviour and the pupils themselves said they were confident that this was dealt with promptly and effectively. The inspectors found that parents' and carers' concerns were considered routinely and acted upon. There were few written comments, but some were testimonials from parents and carers about the high levels of support given both to them and their children, the approachability of the teachers, and how the school has acted to deal with their concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Blowers Green 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 94 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 259 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	57	61	37	39	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	60	64	31	33	2	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	47	50	39	41	3	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	40	44	47	10	11	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	44	47	43	46	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	43	46	42	45	6	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	38	40	47	50	6	6	1	1
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)	32	34	47	50	7	7	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	35	49	52	9	10	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	39	37	39	11	12	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	35	45	48	10	11	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	39	41	44	47	8	9	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	50	53	38	40	3	3	1	1

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.



18 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blowers Green Primary School, Dudley, DY2 8UZ

On behalf of all the inspectors, I would like to thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school and we really enjoyed talking with you all. We think that that yours is a satisfactory school.

Those of you in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress, especially in your speaking and listening. The teachers and adults in your school look after you well. Your behaviour is good. You do a good job in improving your school through, for instance, the school council and your work as playground helpers. You feel safe at school and know that if you have a problem there is always an adult to talk to. You told us that you enjoy coming to school and particularly like the range of clubs and other activities on offer. The teaching is satisfactory and getting better. This is helping you to make satisfactory progress, and the extra help many of you receive has also helped you catch up. We noticed how much you enjoyed the oral story telling lessons. This is helping you to improve your own writing and you were clearly having a lot of fun. Although you are making satisfactory progress in mathematics, we think this could be better. We have asked the school to make sure this happens by giving you opportunities to practise your skills in other lessons as well.

We noticed that sometimes you found tasks too difficult. We have asked the school to make sure you are all given the right amount of challenge so that you can complete tasks successfully. We noticed also that you make good progress when you work in pairs and small groups to solve problems, so we have asked the school to provide more opportunities for you to work in this way. The headteacher and staff are working hard to improve your school. You can all help too by continuing to work hard and by coming to school regularly.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Judith Tolley

Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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