

Blakesley Hall Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103300
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	355358
Inspection dates	7–8 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Ian Jones

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	609
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anita Brock
Headteacher	Heather Phillips
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 24 lessons and observed almost all the teachers. They held meetings with the headteacher, staff, pupils, parents and carers. The school's work was observed and various documents, including a range of self-evaluation documentation, the school's improvement plan, progress reports, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' progress, were scrutinised. Inspectors analysed questionnaires from 48 parents and carers and took account of staff and pupil questionnaires.

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

- How well do pupils learn in English and mathematics, especially those for whom English is an additional language?
- What contribution does pupils' behaviour make to learning and progress?
- What is the impact of the school's work to promote regular attendance?
- How well does monitoring by leaders and managers help improve teaching?

Information about the school

Three quarters of pupils at this above average-sized primary school are from ethnic minority families, the majority of whom are Pakistani. Most pupils speak English as an additional language. About half of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is much higher than the national average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than average although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is average. The school operates before- and after-school clubs. The school has achieved the national Healthy Schools status, the Activemark for sport and a Quality Mark for its work in English and mathematics.

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

Blakesley Hall Primary is a good school. Led by a determined and effective headteacher, the school has worked successfully to overcome barriers to learning faced by some pupils. As a result, behaviour is now good, the attainment and progress of pupils have risen, provision is much improved and attendance is rising. There is a clear upward pattern of improvement. While the progress of some pupils is outstanding, progress is good overall because the rate of attendance of some pupils is not high enough. School monitoring and evaluation systems are robust, with the result that leaders and managers have a clear understanding of strengths and areas for improvement. These are significant developments and demonstrate that the school has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

Care, guidance and support for pupils is at the heart of the school's work. There is effective support for those pupils at the early stages of learning English, pupils who enter the school at times other than the usual starting points, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This approach is appreciated by parents and carers who have positive views of the school, as for example the one who commented, 'The school is always friendly and welcoming to all...there is always someone on the playground to speak to about any issue. The school is a safe, secure and happy place to be.' Pupils share these views and demonstrate good attitudes to learning; they are polite and enjoy school. They participate enthusiastically in school life. Attendance has improved steadily since the last inspection and the level of persistent absenteeism is falling; nevertheless attendance remains low largely because of the significant number of families who take extended holidays taken during term time.

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and this continues as they move through the school. By the time pupils transfer to secondary schools at the end of Year 6, many reach average standards in writing, reading and mathematics and achieve well. The school carefully monitors the progress of all groups of pupils and this contributes to the clear, upward pattern of improvement. There is some inconsistency in provision in science, especially in opportunities to investigate and explore.

Improvements to teaching and assessment have improved steadily and securely to a good level. The curriculum is imaginatively and effectively presented and offers a broad range of experiences enjoyed by pupils. These factors have led to improved outcomes for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those at the early stages of speaking English.

The governing body makes a strong contribution to the management of the school, effectively applying checks and balances to ensure that good progress is made towards realising improvement priorities.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in science by:
 - developing assessment strategies so that work is closely matched to the needs of learners
 - providing regular opportunities for pupils to participate in practical and investigative science.
- Improve the rate of attendance to average by continuing to work with parents and carers.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Achievement has improved significantly since the previous inspection and is now good. Pupils enter the school with attainment often well below the levels expected for their age, including some at the very early stages of language acquisition. They make good progress in English and mathematics and attainment is average by the time they leave at Year 6. It is clear from the school's current data and evidence seen both in lessons and in the pupils' work that attainment is continuing to improve. Work in books and school data confirm that all groups of pupils are making good progress, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language. All groups of pupils are rapidly and securely closing gaps in their knowledge and understanding. In English and mathematics in particular, pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to next to improve. They know their personal targets well and enjoy the regular opportunities to assess their own work. Progress in science however is satisfactory because work is not always well-matched to learners' needs and in some years there is not sufficient emphasis on practical investigations.

Pupils' behave well in lessons and around the school and they are polite and courteous. This makes a strong contribution to their learning because they assess their own progress regularly and they are eager to learn. They enjoy positive relationships with adults and respond promptly to their guidance. Pupils cooperate well together in lessons. They are rightly proud of the school and look after it well. Pupils say they enjoy lessons and demonstrate confidence in their ability to learn well because they are clear about exactly what is expected. Pupils say that there is no bullying in the school. Improvements in their basic skills mean that pupils are appropriately prepared for the move to the next stage of their education. Pupils enjoy many opportunities to take responsibility and contribute to school life. For example, the active school council runs the healthy tuck shop.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a secure understanding of the difference between right and wrong and get on well together. Pupils contribute well to the local community, regularly participating in local events and fund raising for local, national and international charities. All pupils in Year 4 learn to play a musical instrument, and pupils enjoy a wide range of opportunities to participate in sporting and other activities after school.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

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	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	4
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 school cares for, guides and supports pupils well. Effective arrangements ensure that pupils move smoothly between key stages and on to secondary education. Strong links with support agencies ensure that the most vulnerable children and families receive the support they need to successfully engage in education.

Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection, notably in English and mathematics. The use of assessment ensures that learning is carefully planned to take account of pupils' needs. Clear learning objectives are at the forefront of lessons and pupils understand these, so that all groups of pupils know what they are learning about and why. Individual support to those at an early stage of learning English and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is tailored effectively to meet their needs. Teaching often combines high expectations for what pupils can achieve with positive relationships to secure good progress. Marking is particularly effective in English and mathematics, where pupils are given regular opportunities to reflect on their progress and assess their performance. All teaching assistants are fully involved in lesson planning and are well aware of pupils' individual needs. Teachers ensure teaching assistants are clear about what they are expected to do and how best to support pupils with learning difficulties.

The curriculum has been improved since the last inspection and now provides good links between subjects. An emphasis on speaking and listening has led to accelerated progress.

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Pupils say that they enjoy the interesting way lessons are presented, and the regular evaluations they make at the end of each topic add to their enjoyment and help teachers refine future lessons. However, science lessons do not consistently support the development of investigative skills. In some lessons there is not enough independent research and work is not carefully matched to the varying needs of learners. Arrangements to set pupils in groups of similar ability have contributed well to pupils' accelerated progress in English and mathematics. A good range of sporting and other activities, visits and visitors helps extend and enhance the curriculum.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides strong leadership. She is well supported by the deputy headteacher and other leaders and together they have taken effective action to enhance provision and so raise attainment for all groups of pupils. This improvement demonstrates that the school promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination well. Senior leaders set high expectations for colleagues who consequently reflect similarly high expectations of pupils. Regular meetings to analyse pupils' performance, individually and by groups, and informed by detailed assessment information, effectively hold teachers to account. Subject leaders have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities; they monitor and evaluate thoroughly the quality of learning and this contributes to the increase in the rate of progress. Self-evaluation systems are transparent and effective in ensuring improvement. Systems to track pupils' progress in English and mathematics and to monitor provision are effective.

The governing body provides good challenge to school leaders and contributes well to the school's strategic direction. Safeguarding policies and procedures are robust and regularly reviewed, so that adults and pupils have a strong understanding of safety issues. Community cohesion is promoted well. Pupils have a good understanding of people from different backgrounds, and the school has successful links with contrasting schools in this country and abroad. Work to develop understanding of local and wider communities is effective as demonstrated by how well pupils of different backgrounds get on together.

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

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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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed, ensuring that children make good progress across all the areas of learning. Attainment on entry to the school is well below that expected, and children enter Year 1 with broadly average attainment. Children are very well cared for and are happy and safe. They behave well and enjoy good relationships with adults and with other children from a range of different backgrounds. The school offers a wide range of stimulating activities and there is a good balance of those which are child-initiated and those led by adults. For example, children particularly enjoyed planting carrot seeds and cooperated well to complete the task. Effective use is made of the outside learning environment which widely extends learning across the curriculum. Adults assess children's progress regularly and use this information well in targeting learning. There is good emphasis on supporting children's communication skills. Support for those children learning English as an additional language is particularly effective. Children are integrated appropriately and receive effective support and assistance, and leaders acknowledge that there is further work needed to develop even closer links with local nurseries.

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	2

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Stage

Views of parents and carers

Although only a small proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire; it is clear that parents and carers prefer to talk directly with teachers. All staff meet parents and carers each morning and share good relationships. Nearly all parents and carers were very positive about the school. They feel that their children enjoy school, are safe, supported to develop healthy lifestyles, and that the school keeps them well informed regarding their children's progress. These views were confirmed through informal discussions with a number of parents and carers during the inspection. The school regularly analyses the views of parents and carers and these are consistently positive.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Blakesley Hall 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 48 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 609 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	26	54	20	42	1	2	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	22	46	22	46	3	6	1	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	21	44	24	50	2	4	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	31	27	56	4	8	2	4
The teaching is good at this school	20	42	21	44	6	13	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	31	25	52	8	17	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	25	33	69	1	2	1	2
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)	13	27	23	48	3	6	2	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	12	25	24	50	6	13	2	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	31	23	48	3	6	4	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	27	27	56	3	6	2	4
The school is led and managed effectively	19	40	22	46	1	2	3	6
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	35	24	50	3	6	3	6

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

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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

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

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

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

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



9 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blakesley Hall Primary School, Birmingham, B33 8TH

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently and for telling us all about it. You told us how much your school has improved. We think it is doing well and is now a good school. We see how much better you are doing in English and mathematics. We also see that your behaviour has improved and that you work well with your teachers.

Mrs Phillips and all the staff are doing a good job at bringing about improvements to your school and in keeping you interested in learning and improving your work. We were especially impressed with your reading, writing and mathematics and the ways which the school helps you to think about your learning.

We think that these are the things the school needs to do to improve:

Teachers should help you make good progress in science by assessing your work carefully and using that information to support your learning. They need to plan more frequent opportunities for you to experiment and explore.

Mrs Phillips and all the staff should work even more closely with your parents and carers to make sure that you all attend school as often as you can so that you make as much progress as possible.

You can help by coming to school every day and continuing to try hard and do your best.

Yours sincerely

Ian Jones

Lead Inspector

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