

Blakenall Heath Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104144
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	355532
Inspection dates	30–31 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Juliet Jaggs

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	167
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine Boxold
Headteacher	Peter Heath
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 16 lessons, seeing 11 teachers, and had meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at self-evaluation documentation, monitoring and assessment information, lesson plans and school policies. They analysed questionnaires from 154 pupils, 13 staff and 76 parents and carers. The school's safeguarding procedures were also evaluated.

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

- The impact of the school's actions to accelerate progress and so improve attainment, particularly in English.
- The impact of the school's strategy to raise and sustain better levels of attendance.
- The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation strategy in challenging weaknesses and stimulating quantifiable improvement.

Information about the school

Blakenall Heath Junior School is smaller than the average primary school. The largest group of pupils are of White British heritage and the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below average. A large proportion of pupils, almost 60%, are known to be eligible for free school meals. Nearly a quarter of the pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most of the pupils join the school from the nearby feeder school and live within the immediate area. The school has gained Healthy Schools status and the bronze Eco Schools 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

Blakenall Heath Junior School is a satisfactory school. Senior leaders are determined that each child will have a positive experience and succeed in spite of the challenges they face. Care, guidance and support are good and parents and carers are extremely positive about the education that their children receive. There has been a marked improvement in attendance which is now average. Senior leaders prioritise pupils' safety and welfare and the result is a pleasant learning environment that encourages pupils to commit to school. Pupils feel valued and they appreciate all that is done for them. They assume responsibility easily so they behave well and treat the facilities with respect.

Senior leaders use their own self-evaluation strategies to gather details about their work. Although the results are not always sufficiently quantified, they enable leaders to identify the school's broad strengths and weaknesses. This sound self-evaluation has prompted a number of recent strategic improvements that are having an impact on pupils' achievement. English and mathematics are now taught in sets so teaching has become more focused on meeting the particular needs of pupils in these lessons. However, work within English is not always finely tuned to the abilities within the set. Attainment is low but progress has improved significantly since January and is now satisfactory. The school's checks on pupils' progress are continually reviewed. Senior leaders are alert to potential underachievement, and extra individual and small group sessions are some of the successful strategies leading to better progress. These recent successes in addition to the steady improvement since the last inspection mean the school has a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

The whole-school changes are having an impact in the classroom, but practice is not yet consistently good across the school. In English, pupils now talk about their learning because of the comprehensive marking strategies used by some teachers. These are not universal and have yet to be applied in mathematics. Lessons are busy but not all pupils are able to explain the purpose of the activities. Some teachers skilfully persevere when helping individuals to understand their errors but others overlook opportunities to focus learning. The school's data collection systems are robust but analysis has yet to generate challenging targets for pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities or more able pupils. This means that these groups make steady rather than accelerated progress.

Members of the governing body are extremely positive about helping the school and they use their expertise well to monitor the financial management of the school. They understand the academic priorities and are beginning to analyse the pupils' performance so that they too can contribute to more rigorous target setting.

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.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by:
 - communicating constructive feedback to pupils, particularly in mathematics, so that they clearly understand how to improve
 - ensuring that all pupils understand the learning intention from the beginning of the lesson so that dialogue about activities and concepts enhance learning.
- Sharpen the impact of data analysis so that all pupils, and especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the more able, make better progress by:
 - providing relevant and immediate targets that motivate success
 - matching activities in lessons more closely to the needs of different pupils, particularly in English.
- Improve the impact of all leaders and managers, including members of the governing body, by incorporating quantifiable measures of success within self-evaluation procedures.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils are enthusiastic and they are quick to settle to work. Most of them can describe the tasks which have been set but some are not aware of what they are learning. Pupils are keen to test their understanding by discussing different applications of new ideas. For example, pupils in Year 5 were excited by a rapid mental multiplication quiz which meant they were equipped to tackle the more complex two-step word problems that followed. Pupils work effectively in groups or with a partner and they sustain their learning activities together. Pupils in Year 6 enjoyed building a framework for writing a discussion text about the rights of ghosts so they were able to present counter-arguments. When provided with writing frames that help to break down writing into small steps, pupils are able to express themselves accurately but the quality of prose is variable when they draft work independently.

Pupils join the school with low levels of attainment. They take time to readjust to school after the summer but they do make much better progress once they are settled. Attainment in mathematics is slightly higher than that in English but overall attainment is still low by the time pupils leave. Nevertheless, progress is showing secure and rapid improvement and so achievement is satisfactory. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is a little uneven across different classes but it is satisfactory overall. Those eligible for free school meals make better than expected gains in their learning throughout the year because of the emphasis on their engagement with school. More able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently to achieve their best, so sometimes their rate of learning drops.

Pupils' positive personal qualities and commitment to school mean they behave well and are satisfactorily prepared for the next stages in their education. Pupils say that the best thing about school is that everyone is friendly. They feel safe and reassured by their peers who take on the role of 'school patrol'. Pupils volunteer calmly when they anticipate that something needs to be done. They are committed to consultations with the local authority

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meal service providers so that they can influence healthy menu choices in school. Many of them respond well to the high expectations of the popular 'sing up' activity as they are good singers and enjoy representing the school in local community events. The heads of the new school houses are proud of their position and they are encouraging a growing commitment to fundraising for local charities. Pupils are understanding and welcoming, but have limited experience of people from cultures different from their own.

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	4
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?

Teachers plan activities logically so lessons are brisk and pupils are attentive. Activities in mathematics sessions are varied so the needs of different learners are met simultaneously. However, routine lesson planning rarely addresses the varied needs of individual pupils; most pupils complete identical tasks in English so there is not the range of support and challenge in these lessons. Marking procedures are consistent in literacy books and pupils are beginning to develop effective habits for identifying how they can improve. However, the feedback provided in other subjects is more variable so pupils do not always understand what they have to do to make progress.

The existing curriculum is planned to sustain the priority for improving literacy and numeracy and there are systems in place to measure its impact. Pupils have access to a variety of intervention strategies if their achievement levels start to fall. For example, a small group of Year 4 pupils are attending extra reading sessions and they have made

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good progress during their ten-week course. The school has just initiated a curriculum review to reflect the themes within it. For example, pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are improving because they are now integrated into other subjects. Pupils' learning and personal development are supported by memorable events such as the Year 6 visit to Ironbridge and by a range of extra-curricular activities, including gardening and drama.

Provision for the pupils' good care is founded on some key partnerships. The learning mentor is pivotal to the good relationship between parents, carers and the educational welfare officer and this is having a positive impact on reducing absence. Links with the partner infant school ensure that effective transition arrangements help new pupils settle quickly. Senior leaders persevere on behalf of vulnerable pupils to ensure that they receive support from external agencies. The learning mentor and the coordinator for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities monitor the general progress of these pupils but current targets are not challenging enough to promote even better achievement.

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 has done much to establish the positive atmosphere in the school. Underachievement has been tackled steadily and there is now a real sense of progress. Middle leadership responsibilities are shared among a team and, to support their professional development, roles rotate on an annual basis. Their expertise is integrated across the core subjects so there is a growing trend for common learning and assessment practices to promote literacy and numeracy. These have not been fully coordinated with provision for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, but this is now improving.

The school promotes equality satisfactorily. Senior leaders are using their data in consultation with middle leaders to tailor provision for certain groups. For example, reading journals have been introduced for a group of Year 5 boys to encourage better progress in reading. Middle leaders use curriculum review procedures to address lower standards. For example, the quality of pupils' writing and punctuation is improving after middle leaders identified this issue while monitoring exercise books. Senior leaders create an inclusive learning environment but tracking procedures to gauge the extent to which particular individuals are overcoming challenges that affect their achievement and attendance are not yet fully in place.

Various stakeholders are consulted about their views of school events and procedures but because some self-evaluation is not set against numeric measures, this limits how well

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improvements can be fine-tuned and evaluated. Teachers receive guidance about improvements in the classroom but these are not always closely linked to pupils' learning and progress so their impact is less convincing. Governance is sound. Members of the governing body work closely with the headteacher and support the work of the school wholeheartedly.

Administrative arrangements to safeguard pupils are meticulous and all staff apply policies consistently so that care is practical as well as kind. There are a number of additional strategies to involve parents and carers in their children's learning including pamphlets that encourage reading and school events about health. Parents and carers acknowledge their overwhelming support for the school and comments on the questionnaire such as 'I couldn't wish for a better junior school for my son' were typical of those received.

Senior leaders have an accurate view of its local context and they are determined that the school inspires a positive approach to education within the community. A new partnership with the local library promotes pupils' access to books but it is too early to gauge the impact on reading. Links with the local Christian Indian radio station are beginning to make pupils more aware of different cultures as well as facilitating wider contacts, for example with an orphanage in India. Other ongoing opportunities for the pupils to develop an understanding of national cultures and religions are less well developed.

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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

An above average proportion of parents and carers returned questionnaires. They were nearly all entirely positive about Blakenall Heath and felt that the school keeps their children safe and enables them to enjoy school. They commended the teachers and said that their children are making progress because the school meets their needs. Some parents and carers commented particularly on the way in which the school was able to

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identify and then address difficulties especially in writing. Inspectors found the school has good care and safeguarding procedures and generally meets the needs of its pupils.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Blakenhall Heath Junior 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 76 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 167 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	36	47	38	50	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	38	50	36	47	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	34	45	38	50	3	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	46	40	53	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	39	51	36	47	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	39	40	53	3	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	38	45	59	1	1	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)	30	39	42	55	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	41	43	57	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	37	42	55	3	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	34	45	59	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	32	42	41	54	3	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	47	39	51	1	1	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	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.



1 April 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blakenall Heath Junior School, Walsall WS3 3JF

Thank you for your help during the recent inspection of your school. We were all very struck by how polite you were and how you were willing to give your time to talk to us. Your views have been taken into account and we have found that Blakenall Heath Junior School is a satisfactory school. Here are some of the main findings from the report.

- Your school takes care to make sure you are safe and well looked after. You told us that you feel safe and this is something that your parents and carers agreed with.
- You have worked hard to improve attendance because you want to do well.
- Your parents and carers are pleased that you are happy at school.
- You take responsibility seriously and we were impressed by your new house system.
- We thought behaviour was good, even though some of you disagreed in the survey.
- Although standards are lower than is typical, they are rising and you are making satisfactory progress.
- Those of you who come out of lessons for extra help do well in these sessions.
- Your school has made some important changes recently, for example having groups for English and mathematics, and this is beginning to make a difference.

We have asked the teachers to help the school improve further by:

- using information about your progress to set more challenging targets and activities in your lessons
- giving you more detailed feedback so that you know how to improve
- reminding you what you are learning during lessons to check you understand
- sharpening up the way school leaders check on how everyone is doing.

You can help by continuing to do your best at your school.

Yours sincerely

Juliet Jaggs

Lead inspector

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