

Blidworth Oaks Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131560
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	360292
Inspection dates	14–15 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Andrew Stafford

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	298
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susie Bergenroth
Headteacher	Celia Lassetter
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2008
School address	Haywood Avenue Blidworth, Mansfield NG21 0RE
Telephone number	01623 792348
Fax number	01623 797419
Email address	office@blidworthoaks.notts.sch.uk

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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 17 lessons and observed 11 teachers and teaching assistants. They held meetings with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, parents and carers, and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation relating to: attainment and the assessment of pupils' progress; school policies; the school's self-evaluation report; minutes of governing body meetings; and the provision for safeguarding. They also looked at samples of pupils' work and the school development plan. They analysed 71 parent and carer questionnaires and the responses from pupils and staff.

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

The progress made by pupils in Years 3 to 6, particularly those who join and leave the school other than at the normal times.

- The quality of the challenge that teachers provide to secure pupils' good progress, particularly in Years 3 to 6.
- The effectiveness of improvement planning to accelerate progress across the school.

Information about the school

Blidworth Oaks is larger than the average-size primary school. The vast majority of the pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Most of these have moderate learning difficulties, behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, or are diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder. The school is able to provide for pupils with physical disabilities. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. A larger than average proportion of pupils join and leave the school other than at the normal times. The school provides a part-time nursery for children aged three years, prior to them transferring to the Reception class on a full-time basis. The school has recently gained a number of awards, including Activemark and the Intermediate International Schools' Award, and has achieved national Healthy Schools status.

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

Blidworth Oaks is a satisfactory school. It provides an excellent standard of care, guidance and support. It is evident from the questionnaires completed by parents and carers, pupils and staff that most are proud to be part of Blidworth Oaks. The large majority recognise that it is a well-led and improving school. As one parent with a young child in the Early Years Foundation Stage wrote: 'What a great school, they have done wonders for my daughter. She has met all her target levels and is working above her age levels in some areas.' Most children start school with skills well below those expected for their age and make good progress in the excellent Early Years Foundation Stage.

The inclusive and caring environment nurtures pupils' personal and social skills well, leading them to develop a secure sense of right and wrong. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe; they have well-rounded attitudes to living healthy lifestyles and behave well. Pupils enjoy much of what the school has to offer. They make an excellent contribution to the school and to the local community. Pupils are successful in sporting activities, lead the singing at local community events choir and they have particularly valued the opportunity to help develop the school's quadrangle area as part of outside learning provision. Pupils have been successful in the county competition that judges direct involvement in the community through the 'Helping Hands' project. Good curriculum opportunities impact positively on pupils' outstanding awareness of the differences in multicultural society, resulting in the excellent promotion of community cohesion. Opportunities to learn within the cluster of local partner schools, and in the Linking Schools project, help pupils to develop empathy and respect for others. They understand that there are others who face extreme challenges in their lives and raise money for a range of good causes. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities and are keen to give their views on how the school can improve.

The senior leaders are ambitious for the school and determined that pupils will reach their potential. Currently their academic achievement is satisfactory. However, there is evidence of the developing effectiveness of improvement planning to accelerate progress. The development of systems to track how well pupils are doing, together with the actions taken to improve the quality of teaching and learning, are starting to have a positive impact on the progress pupils make and the standards they reach. The school's robust tracking system is helping to accelerate pupils' progress further. Teaching is satisfactory because it is not yet consistently strong enough to ensure that learning and progress are consistently good throughout the school.

A substantial proportion of good teaching was observed across the school during the inspection, and this good practice is being shared widely in efforts to raise standards. Last year over half of the pupils in the school made better than expected progress and overall standards in English and mathematics rose at the end of Year 6. Sometimes in trying to

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make writing activities interesting and relevant, as part of the school's drive to raise standards in writing, the focus on what pupils are learning gets lost and the task becomes more important. Questioning is not always used well enough to challenge pupils to recall and apply what they have learnt or to help them understand whether they have been successful. Data from the most recent assessments are used well to organise pupils into groups for lessons. However, planning still does not always pay sufficient attention to the range of abilities that exist within the groups and some pupils are not challenged sufficiently by having demanding targets set.

Rigorous monitoring and honest self-evaluation mean that leaders have an accurate picture of what the school is doing well and a clear plan is in place to tackle the improvements that are needed in the future. These, and the improvements to date, demonstrate that the school has good capacity to sustain further improvement.

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good teaching in reading, writing and mathematics so that most pupils make good progress by ensuring that teachers consistently:
 - set targets that challenge the learning needs of pupils of all abilities
 - keep the lesson sharply focused on what pupils are learning rather than the activity they are doing
 - use questioning to encourage pupils to recall and apply their learning, and to help them understand what they are doing well and how they can improve.
- Implement plans to ensure that at least 80% of pupils achieve nationally expected levels or above in writing by:
 - extending professional development for staff by developing the networks from which good practice can be shared
 - reinforce the consistency of marking, and feedback to pupils, so that they can take greater responsibility for reaching the next steps in their learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Most pupils start at school with skills well below those expected for their age and often with very limited language. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning because they respond well to teachers' own enthusiasm in lessons and the good relationships they develop with their classes. Pupils are generally interested in what they are doing, listen attentively during whole-class sessions, get on with the tasks set for them and behave well. In the best lessons teachers sustain a brisk pace of learning and pupils were seen to enjoy demands from individual challenges. Overall, evidence from lessons seen during the inspection, monitoring over time and data shows that progress is improving. Over the last year pupils in Year 6 reached broadly average standards in English and mathematics and pupils in Years 3 to 6 made accelerated progress in writing. Pupils who join the school at a time other than normal reach the expected level for their age. This is because the school rises to fresh challenges and is able to provide support for these pupils, helping them to

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learn at rates appropriate to their capabilities. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with physical disabilities, make good progress because rigorous tracking identifies them early, so that they get the additional expert support they need in good time to manage the small steps in learning necessary for them to move forward.

Standards at the end of Year 6 are higher than they were two years ago. While over time standards have been significantly below average, the gap when compared with the national average has closed over the last two years. The school's assessment data and observations of pupils at work show that standards of the current Year 6 pupils are in line with those expected, and that the gaps between the progress of boys and girls are closing.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	3
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	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	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	3
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?

Teachers work hard to make learning interesting. However, on one observed occasion the imaginative activity for speaking and listening did not hold the children's interest long enough for the intended learning outcomes to be successful. Information and communication technology is often used well to support whole-class teaching. In a Year 5 and 6 lesson pupils worked on the fable of 'Robin Hood and the Apprentice'. By taking one of the success criteria they came up with ideas for their own stories. They enjoyed working in groups on the theme of good and evil and mapped out suggestions that showed their thoughtful responses to the moral issues in the fable.. Over the last year, the

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school has focused on developing pupils' understanding of how well they are doing and what are the next steps in their learning. In lessons, teachers tell pupils what they will be learning and emphasise links with previous lessons.

Over recent years, the school has used mixed-aged classes and developed its own curriculum, as a way of raising all pupils' achievements. Pupils are taught specific skills through studying special pieces of literature, the benefit of which is seen in the level of interest and engagement. This has had a positive impact on narrowing the gap between reading and writing across the school and improving the number of pupils who are on track to achieve the nationally expected level by the end of Year 6. The school consistently develops new curriculum plans to provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their creativity and make meaningful links between subjects. It is too early to see the full impact on standards across the full age range, but feedback from pupils and staff show it is boosting pupils' enjoyment.

The vast majority of parents and carers say that the school is very caring. This is borne out by inspection findings of the school's ethos and the actions of staff in lessons and outside the classrooms. It is evident that individuals are known very well and are treated with respect. Staff work very hard to involve parents and carers in their children's learning. The school's strong links with its local secondary school leads to pupils' smooth transition on transfer. Strenuous efforts are made to sustain pupils' regular attendance, with additional support provided for those returning after periods of absence. Some pupils encounter particular challenges which can be barriers to their learning and well-being. Staff swiftly identify pupils who are falling behind their targets and put in timely additional support. The school very effectively matches additional support and care to their needs, for example by using one-to-one tuition, specialist reading tuition or links with professional agencies, to get them back on track.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher brings energy and enthusiasm to her work and has high expectations of staff and pupils. She works effectively with her strong senior leaders and has raised the profile of subject leaders. A combination of consultation on plans for improvement, professional development focused on key priorities and performance management ensures that staff across the school know exactly what leaders and managers are trying to achieve and what their role is. As one teacher commented, 'I am proud to be part of the movement for improvement that is sweeping through our school.' The school is identifying the opportunities to extend professional development, from the expertise that exists

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across the family of schools, to reinforce the improvement in writing. A thread through all aspects of the school's work is its commitment to equality. It considers carefully how well different groups of pupils are doing and knows which may need additional support. Topics, such as 'Who do we think we are?' and links to schools across this country and in Africa, celebrate the rich diversity within the local community and beyond. This explains why the pupils develop a very good understanding of each other's backgrounds and why the school is such a cohesive and harmonious place. Pupils' awareness of different faiths and cultures is developed well through visits to, for example, a Hindu temple, and hearing a rabbi talk about Jewish traditions and festivals. The school actively seeks the views of parents and carers to make sure it understands their particular needs. For example, in response to feedback it is running more courses for parents and carers to have the opportunity to understand how they can support their children's learning.

The recently appointed Chair of the Governing Body demonstrates a drive for improvement to rival the headteacher's and together they are developing force to bring about change. The members of the governing body bring the right mix of skills and experience to move the school forward. There is a core of governors who are able to ensure they can provide a secure level of support and challenge for senior leaders. Their approach has made an important contribution to the current school improvement. Frequent visits to the school by a number of governors mean that they have good links with staff and subject areas, leading to an up-to-date and accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development.

Safeguarding procedures are robust and are reviewed regularly. There are clear procedures for ensuring the safety of pupils, backed up by regular training for staff. Pupils feel they are safe in school, as do their parents and carers, and know that their views are taken into account. They appreciate that the school helps them to learn how to keep themselves safe, for example the 'Staying Safe' week which drew on connections with the local police, fire and ambulance services.

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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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to an excellent start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. When children join the school their skills are below those expected, especially in language and communication. Over the time they are in the Nursery and the Reception Year, outcomes are good because children make good progress in the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills. When they move to Year 1 most achieve average standards in reading, writing and number. Staff are led exceptionally well by a highly effective, enthusiastic and skilled leader. The success of the setting is due to the leader's very well developed understanding of how children learn and how best to meet every child's individual needs. She is able to convey this information very effectively to her colleagues and their excellent contribution to provision leads the vast majority of children to make much better progress than would be expected. Staff training is closely linked to ensuring the well-being of the children and improving further the quality of their learning and development. For example, staff have had specific training through sharing good practice at local network meetings and also on how to develop early excellence in children's literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills.

Staff work very hard to be fully inclusive, following the excellent example shown by the setting's leader, and involve all children and their families. They have been forming very close links with the local community, especially through home visits, and excellent liaison with the Surestart centre. This has led to a better understanding of how parents and carers can support their children's education as they start school in the Nursery classes. Parents and carers are made to feel very welcome when they arrive and are often encouraged to stay, particularly in a child's first days. As a result, children are settled and happy, and their personal development is strong. Daily routines help the children to feel secure. They form good relationships with the adults that support them. The excellent provision enables them to learn to keep themselves safe and healthy from an early age

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and begin to develop an awareness of the needs and feelings of others. Activities are planned very well to meet individual needs, taking into account children's interests and preferences based on observations of them at play and listening to what they and their parents and carers say. Children particularly enjoy the opportunities they have to learn and play outside. The location of classes gives the Nursery and Reception classes good access to the very good outdoor learning areas, and the school has fully developed these areas for effective joint learning.

Nursery staff are well qualified and have a good understanding of children's development. They keep parents and carers fully informed with a daily record of their child's day. Throughout the day, children are offered stimulating play opportunities across all the areas of learning both in the bright, airy inside area and in the well-fenced, soft-surfaced outdoor area. There is a strong focus on children's well-being and ensuring a safe environment for their learning and development.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

There was a low response by parents and carers in returning the questionnaire. The very large majority who did so said that, overall, they were happy with their child's experience at Blidworth Oaks. Parents and carers confirm that their children enjoy school, that their children are safe and are helped to have a healthy lifestyle. Most parents and carers indicated that they agreed that teaching is good and that their child is making sufficient progress. The inspection found that these aspects are improving but are not yet consistently good. A very small minority of parents and carers felt that unacceptable behaviour is not managed effectively, that the school does not take account of their views, and that the school is not led effectively. Inspectors found that behaviour was consistently good and pupils say that it has improved significantly. Inspector's scrutiny of the school's own surveys show that parents' and carers' suggestions have recently been adopted. Inspection found that leadership is leading to improvement and that there has been a continuous dialogue with parents and carers to share the vision for school improvement.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Blidworth Oaks 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 71 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 298 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	36	51	30	42	4	6	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	30	42	38	54	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	26	37	39	55	5	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	37	35	49	7	10	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	32	45	37	52	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	29	41	38	54	2	3	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	34	41	59	4	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)	26	37	38	54	3	4	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	37	37	52	3	4	3	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	25	29	41	15	21	6	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	30	36	51	7	10	4	6
The school is led and managed effectively	23	32	37	52	5	7	5	7
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	44	30	42	6	8	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



16 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blidworth Oaks Primary School, Mansfield, NG21 0RD

It was lovely to meet you when we came to your school. Thank you very much to all of you who spoke to us in lessons, around the school and in the special meetings we had with you. We know that your school takes your views seriously and so do we. We have judged that your school is satisfactory. It is definitely improving, some things it does are good and some are excellent. These are some of the things that we found.

The headteacher and the other staff lead the school well. They know what it does well and what could be better.

All the adults in the school work hard to care for you very well and make sure that you are safe.

The youngest children get off to an excellent start.

You enjoy learning and work hard because lessons are interesting.

You behave well in class and around school.

Your headteacher and her staff are determined to make Blidworth Oaks a better school and to make sure you achieve as well as you can. We discussed with them the most important things they need to do and these are things we have agreed they should do.

Increase the proportion of good teaching so that most of you make good progress.

Make sure that most of you reach the nationally expected level for your age in writing.

We are confident that you will try to do your best and continue to find that learning is fun at Blidworth Oaks. You can help the school improve by always checking with your teachers what you have to do next and asking for help when you do not understand something.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Stafford

Lead inspector

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