

Blean Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118356
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358324
Inspection dates	5–6 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Julie Ritchie

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	460
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hugh Samuelson
Headteacher	Lynn Lawrence
Date of previous school inspection	25 September 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons and observed 14 teachers. They also attended one assembly and observed break, lunchtime and held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at plans and policies, records of assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress. In addition, questionnaires completed by 138 parents and carers, 98 pupils and 25 staff were analysed.

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

- The impact of strategies to improve attainment in writing and mathematics.
- How well does the school identify and remedy any underachievement, particularly for those with special educational needs/and or disabilities and the more able pupils?
- How successfully senior leaders help drive improvement by monitoring teaching and learning
- The school's strategies to track and support pupils falling behind their expected targets.
- The development of writing opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

Blean Primary School is a larger than average school with a large majority of the pupils of White British heritage, with a below average, but growing, number of pupils from other backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is increasing and is just above the national average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The school has won several national awards, including the Healthy Schools status, the Gold Artsmark and the full International Award. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in three Reception class.

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

Blean Primary is a good school. Children are polite and caring towards adults and work together in lessons supporting each other's learning. The newly appointed headteacher, assisted by the enthusiastic leadership team and effective governing body, has created a learning environment where children feel challenged and supported in their learning. In one lesson a pupil commented that they 'enjoyed being able to work with their talking partner and share ideas'.

The headteacher and the governing body, have developed a strong vision for improvement. They are supported by an effective team where middle managers play a role in self-evaluation and this development is already impacting positively on the progress of all pupils. The school's accurate self-evaluation and the plans arising from it effectively drive improvement. The school has responded to the issues raised in the last inspection and the strategies put in place are monitored, showing the school knows its pupils well. The effective contribution of all concerned, coupled with sound systems and procedures, means that the school has good capacity to sustain further improvement. Whilst the school has been moving forward to enhance the opportunities for the pupils, this new vision is not always clearly shared with the parents and carers to fully inform them of the school's current and future plans.

Children have a good start to school and make good progress throughout so that the attainment of pupils at the end of Year 6 is consistently above average. Pupils achieve well by the time they leave. Assessment systems implemented to track progress in mathematics and writing are supporting the progress of individuals as well as groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Consolidating this is central to the school's view of further development in increasing the rate of pupils' progress in English. The progress pupils make in writing is less rapid in the Reception classes as opportunities to promote writing in the outside learning area are sometimes missed. The school's tracking system shows that achievement in writing generally is not as secure as is the case for other basic skills. Monitoring of teaching and learning is being used as a highly effective tool in making improvements for all groups of pupils, with lessons planned to include pupils of differing abilities. Support staff are well deployed to help pupils in their everyday learning.

Staff are committed to the school and the well-being of the pupils. One comment made by a member of staff during a period of change highlighted the sustained team work saying, 'As a whole staff, we have worked hard to minimise the effect on the pupils.' This is borne out by pupils, parents and carers questionnaires who feel supported by the school staff. Teaching is rarely less than good with children being sent 'on a mission to reach their learning objective' in one well taught lesson. Pupils' behaviour observed in and around the school is good, and pupils are polite and considerate to adults as well as each other. Pupils

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show a high level of independence, with the school council able to clearly identify what works well and what it needs to develop further in the school and the playground to ensure the pupils feel safe.

The assembly was well used to promote social cohesion, morals and sportsmanship with the older pupils showing younger pupils how to treat others. The school provides a good breadth of curricular opportunities, adding to the enjoyment of pupils at the school. Pupils take advantage of the activities on offer, enhancing their musical and sporting skills. Strong links with other agencies add support to these areas, creating sporting and learning links. Local links are strong, and national and international links are increasing. Breakfast and after-school clubs offer a good variety of activities and provide good care and opportunities to promote healthy eating and physical activities.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase opportunities for writing across the school:
 - in the Reception classes by extending activities for boys in the outdoor learning area
 - through the rest of the school by giving more emphasis to helping pupils understand what they have to do to improve their work.
- Improve partnerships and information sharing with parents and carers in order to address their concerns.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment is above average with pupils reaching expected targets over the last three years. Pupils usually make good progress, such as that achieved in a good mathematics lesson when pupils were taught to use proportional language. The pupils were engaged throughout, working in table teams in a purposeful way, supporting each other to come to the correct solutions. While progress is generally good, opportunities are being missed in writing to provide opportunities to revisit and extend their ideas. The teaching in most lessons observed was good and pupils in the best lessons made excellent progress.

In most lessons, pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress because tasks are set to match their abilities and they are supported well by teaching assistants. This is particularly true for the more-able pupils who are challenged well. Pupils from other ethnic minority groups make good progress in most basic skills, but this is less accelerated in writing.

Pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of healthy foods to eat and active lifestyles through their participation in physical education lessons and participation in extra active sports provided by the school. The school has received recognition of this through being awarded its Healthy School status and Activemark.

Pupils demonstrate strong levels of social and moral development. They work collaboratively and play together with their peers from a variety of backgrounds. The school has recently been awarded its full International Award in recognition of its work to promote international awareness, with children able to discuss books and foods from around the world. The pupils' questionnaires indicated that most feel safe, enjoy school and learn a lot. Clubs add to further enrich their experiences. Pupils show a mature

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understanding of other people's needs and work very effectively in lessons as groups and as part of a team, although this is not fully developed in the outside play areas. Above average basic skills, above average attendance and good achievement prepare pupils well for their future learning and life in general. They are being helped to grow up as caring, sensible young people.

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	2
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
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 is further developing its curriculum to develop links across subjects in order to provide more meaningful learning opportunities through gaining skills and enquiry activities. Corridors and classrooms have high quality purposeful displays, offering an environment which supports learning.

Planning takes account of different ability levels and tasks are set to match the needs of individuals in the class. This means provision is of good quality, with all teachers in the year group ensuring there is consistent coverage in parallel classes. A good example of this was seen in Year 3 when English was being taught across two classes who were learning similar facts about Shakespeare and his writing style, producing play scripts to deliver in class. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified accurately and quickly and good quality provision ensures they receive effective individual education plans to meet their needs. Potentially high attaining pupils are well provided for

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and, as a result, reach well above expected levels. Most parents feel the school prepares their child well for transition into school, across year groups and on to senior schools.

Virtually all of the teaching observed was at least good. In all lessons, teachers clearly shared learning objectives and provided a calm learning environment. Interactive whiteboards are well used to support learning and add excitement. Teachers were seen to be developing learners who can reflect on their work, with pupils beginning to highlight their strengths and areas in which they could further develop their own work. The school's tracking system is impacting very strongly on the quality of teaching. Class teachers increasingly use this information to identify strengths and areas for pupils' development, making them more accountable for pupils' progress. This information is used to set accurate targets for pupils' learning and to identify any pupils who may underachieve. Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons as pupils are well motivated and allowed to take advantage of independent learning opportunities. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to pastoral and academic development. They work well with pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. One parent felt of the school that, 'It is a positive, friendly environment in which to be educated.'

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 new headteacher has a clear vision which is supported by the governors and staff in the school, although not all parents and carers feel they know the future direction of initiatives. The school has remained stable through a number of changes in leadership over recent years, demonstrating a committed team approach led by the deputy headteachers and supported by the rest of the staff.

The shared approach to school self-evaluation and development planning confirms that all staff are fully subscribed to the leadership team's vision of continuous improvement. This is communicated enthusiastically by leaders at all levels, including those who are not part of the senior leadership team. The quality of teaching is constantly improving as a result of more focused checking of teaching by the leadership team.

The drive for improvement has shown progress is increasing as the leadership team monitors and models good practice. Self-assessment and pupils' involvement in evaluating their own performance and that of their classmates are being developed and are more consistent in Years 5 and 6 than across the rest of the school.

The governing body maintains a good overview of the school's strengths and areas for development and has enough expertise and resolve to ensure that school leaders are well

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supported as well as challenged. The arrangements for safeguarding of pupils are good, with suitable systems and constructive links with outside agencies to aid this. Pupils whose circumstances make them more vulnerable, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, are tracked effectively and well supported by the school team. There are few racist incidents. The incidents of bullying raised through the parent questionnaires were explored and the school was shown to follow school and local authority procedures. Consequently, the effectiveness with which the school promotes equality and seeks to eliminate discrimination is good.

The school promotes pupils' appreciation of different countries and cultures with pupils knowing about different religions and expectations from around the world. Through the school's community cohesion action plan, senior leaders have identified linking with a school from a contrasting location in Great Britain in order to share experiences.

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

Children start in the Reception classes with levels of development which are in line with age-related expectation. They are above the expected levels of development in dispositions and attitudes and counting. The setting adopts an effective, flexible approach to learning which responds well to the children's interests, for example introducing water chutes following the children's wishes to develop this role play area. Children are taught using a multi-sensory approach to learning, beginning from the moment they walk into school where they are greeted by a visual timetable setting out what the day holds. Teachers make appropriate use of assessment information to identify where children could make better progress. As a result, through enjoyable engaging activities, children make good progress in almost all areas of their learning. But, there are missed opportunities for writing, particularly for boys. Children make good links between letters and sounds,

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showing understanding and enjoyment in their learning. They already enter school with above expected levels in counting and this is further promoted through opportunities offered in this stimulating learning environment. Good use is made of resources both indoors and outdoors, with staff interacting well with the children to further extend their learning. Staff have a good knowledge of the children, where they are in their learning and how they need to develop further. As a result, most children are swiftly moved on in their learning.

Leaders responsible for the provision ensure the children's welfare and learning needs are well met. Parents value the provision and feel the programme for starting school meant their children had a smooth introduction to school.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	2
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

The inspection team received a just below average number of responses to the questionnaire.

Analysis indicates that most parents and carers are happy with the school. Written responses were positive. One parent/carer said, 'I feel happy that they are safe and well looked after from the moment they go through the school gate.' A number of parents and carers feel they do not get enough information about the progress of their children and are given too few opportunities to give their views and meet with teachers. Inspectors agree that not all parents and carers are fully informed of initiatives and this is an area the school wishes to improve upon.

Most parents and carers are keen to say that their children enjoy school and that the school keeps them safe. However, a small number of parents voiced a common concern about possible bullying. As a result, the inspection team explored this issue closely and could not find evidence from pupils, staff or from direct observation that bullying was a significant issue. The school correctly follows their own and local authority procedures in dealing with incidents, which they admit do occur from time to time.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Blean 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 138 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 460 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	90	65	42	30	5	4	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	88	64	45	33	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	46	33	77	56	12	9	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	51	37	73	53	11	8	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	65	47	64	46	7	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	46	33	84	61	6	4	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	55	40	79	57	4	3	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)	61	44	67	49	3	2	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	52	38	67	49	16	12	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	40	29	80	58	7	5	7	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	25	81	59	11	8	7	5
The school is led and managed effectively	36	26	74	54	12	9	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	62	45	67	49	4	3	4	3

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.



8 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blean Primary School, Canterbury CT2 9ED

Thank you for your very warm welcome and the help you gave to us during the inspection, especially the school council who gave us lots of information about your school. We were impressed with your good behaviour in the classrooms and around the school.

Your school is a good school and these are the things you should be proud of.

- Your good work in lessons, listening to your teachers and producing your best work.
- All of the staff who support you and help you and provide lots of activities both in and out of school.
- The way the school displays your work. We all liked the writing wall showing writing from Reception to Year 6.
- The headteacher, governors and staff who are working hard to make your school even better.

To help the school, we have asked the headteacher and the governors to do the following.

- Help improve your writing for those of you in the Reception classes, particularly the boys, and by helping all of you to understand how you can improve your writing even more.
- Help your parents and carers know how well the school is improving and what new things may happen next to make it even better.

You can help by continuing to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Julie Ritchie

Lead inspector

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