

# Blackwood School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104211
<b>Local Authority</b>	Walsall
<b>Inspection number</b>	377034
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 September 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Carrington

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	646
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Margaret Yates
<b>Headteacher</b>	Tracey Coles
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 November 2008
<b>School address</b>	Blackwood Road Streetly Sutton Coldfield B74 3PH
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 353 1876
<b>Fax number</b>	0121 580 9569
<b>Email address</b>	postbox@blackwood.walsall.sch.uk

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<b>Registered childcare provision</b>	Little Robins
<b>Number of children on roll in the registered childcare provision</b>	16
<b>Date of last inspection of registered childcare provision</b>	Not inspected previously

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	22–23 September 2011
<b>Inspection number</b>	377034

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They observed 25 lessons led by 21 teachers. Meetings were held with the headteacher, acting deputy headteacher, senior leaders and members of the governing body. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at improvement planning, assessment data, pupils' work, the school's checks on the quality of teaching and a number of policy documents. The team received 318 questionnaires from parents and carers and also evaluated those from pupils and the school staff.

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

- Whether recent improvements in provision for English are enabling pupils to achieve as well as they do in mathematics.
- The extent to which enhancements to the curriculum are making learning consistently challenging and adventurous for all ability groups, especially the more able.
- The degree to which school leadership and governance are bringing greater consistency to pupils' progress and, hence, higher attainment.

## Information about the school

Blackwood School is among the largest primary schools in the country. Two thirds of the pupils are from White British families, and a third are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly Indian. An average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. About five per cent of the pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, which is well below average. At about two per cent, the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much lower than is usually found.

The governing body manages the Little Robins wrap-around care for Nursery age children, which is registered for 16 children. It is also responsible for the Woodpeckers breakfast and after-school clubs, which include children from the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils from Key Stages 1 and 2. Both Little Robins and Woodpeckers were inspected by the team.

There have been significant changes to staffing, leadership and governance since the previous inspection. The headteacher has been in post for one year and at present there is an acting deputy headteacher. There are also a number of new members of the governing body, including a recently appointed Chair.

The school has Healthy Schools status and the Activemark 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?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

Blackwood is a good school. It has many strengths, not least pupils' good progress and above average attainment. The quality of teaching and learning, and care, guidance and support has been improved substantially since the previous inspection and is now good. Pupils are enthusiastic learners who behave well and whose attendance levels are high. All adults in school, whether staff or members of the governing body, have an overriding ambition to ensure pupils have the best education possible. School self-evaluation is incisive and accurate. Ongoing improvement is planned, actioned and monitored thoroughly, with the result that the school has risen from satisfactory to good within a fairly short timescale. The headteacher has high expectations and provides great challenge to staff with very marked humour. The school has good capacity to maintain its rise.

Senior leaders and the governing body recognise there are two key areas for improvement at present. While the curriculum is good and much improved over the judgements in the previous inspection report, the task of ensuring it is consistently exciting and adventurous, allowing pupils to manage their own learning and show resourcefulness and resilience, is not yet complete. Secondly, as members of the governing body themselves admit, their probing of school performance could be at greater depth. This is for the most part because the governing body has changed significantly in its membership. Nonetheless, the governing body is alert to pupils' successes and difficulties in making consistent progress in their work, particularly in English and mathematics.

Staff have worked well to improve pupils' progress in English, particularly in writing. There are many examples of high quality writing across the school, not just from the higher attainers. It is, however, evident that generally, the higher attainers are challenged well in their work. The increased consistency of teaching quality has resulted in greater progress and higher attainment in all years, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, where provision and outcomes are good.

Little Robins gives children in the Nursery a secure and caring environment in which to thrive and grow. The breakfast and after-school clubs are successful in fostering pupils' good behaviour and relationships, and their enthusiasm for school. Because a large number of pupils attend, their enjoyment in the sessions has a strong influence on the approach to work in class.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the curriculum consistently excites pupils and promotes adventurous learning and management of their own work.
- Strengthen the extent and rigour of the governing body's involvement in evaluating the school's performance.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

Attainment and progress have risen since the previous inspection and continue to rise. Achievement in mathematics has been good for a number of years, and continues to be good. Pupils are adept at calculations, measurement and spatial awareness. Their problem solving skills are polished. At the end of an outstanding Year 4 mathematics lesson, a group of pupils explained to the rest of the class how they had compiled a manual spreadsheet to show the credits and debits arising from Robin Hood's gang's trading activities. The pupils were confident in dealing with negative balances and explained with relish how interest would be charged from the end of the first month after the debt arose.

Similarly, achievement in English is good. For example, pupils wrote impressive letters to the headteacher, articulately expressing their ideas on remodelling the school car park. In giving ideas about suitable extensions a girl wrote of one area as 'dull and very lifeless, why would we want more of that? Also the car park has no appeal... a breeding ground for cars'. Boys as much as girls achieve well in writing and in the other subjects and pupils who speak English as an additional language are enthusiastic learners who progress equally well in English and mathematics. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities often achieve very well because their work is carefully tailored to their needs. Overall, progress is at its best in the lessons which capture pupils' imaginations and allow them to manage their own learning.

Despite their thoughts on the limitations of car parking in school, the pupils feel very safe. They welcome the attention paid to their welfare. The awards of Healthy School status and the Activemark reflect the effective drive to improve pupils' diets and physical activity. Behaviour is settled and calm across the school because pupils enjoy good relationships with each other and adults, and are usually respectful of the expectations held of them. Pupils share a marked sense that they are members of the same class and school community and that they should look after other people, whether in school or outside it.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Lesson observations demonstrated that sessions are well planned, carefully tailored to meet different pupils' needs and include ample opportunities for the pupils to evaluate their own learning and that of others. The use of assessment to support learning in this way has improved substantially since new approaches and expectations were introduced a year ago. Lessons are brisk, learning is enthusiastic and work is productive and purposeful.

Just occasionally, pupils do not accomplish as much in lessons because the curriculum is not fully engaging and learning may be unfolded one step at a time. While this step-by-step approach is appropriate for some of the work, it does not always arouse pupils' enthusiasm sufficiently that their own initiative and ideas lead to even greater progress. Senior leaders identified this shortcoming last school year and have revamped provision through the new 'Irresistible Curriculum'. There is ample evidence that the curriculum is now more adventurous in this way although it is not yet consistent across all years and subjects. Because of their good behaviour and willingness to work hard, the pupils themselves are ready for the additional challenges brought by the need to manage their own learning responsibly.

Pupils with any form of barrier to learning are given well planned support, particularly by the team of experienced and expert teaching assistants and the special educational needs coordinator. In many lessons observed, teaching assistants successfully encouraged and fostered good learning by pupils with special

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has developed good partnerships with outside agencies, as well as parents and carers, in providing support and guidance to enable all pupils to achieve successfully. The Little Robins provision is as effective as the Woodpeckers breakfast and after-school clubs in caring and supporting those who attend. The children thoroughly enjoy their time in these sessions and their welfare is assured.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

New ideas are weighed carefully and implemented cautiously but enthusiastically by all staff and members of the governing body. Setbacks are rare, but if they do occur they are used as opportunities to bring even greater improvement. As an example, a few pupils declared they did not enjoy school when compiling the questionnaire for inspectors. When acquainted with this, the headteacher and deputy headteacher immediately planned that the school council would investigate the reason for this concern and make recommendations to overcome it. Senior leaders are founts of knowledge and their expertise has benefited school improvement. Their thoughtful appraisal of school strengths and weaknesses is currently being shared with middle leaders, who are eager to extend their own already good impact on pupils’ achievement.

The governing body is keen to extend its robust scrutiny of school performance. Plans are in place to support and extend its individual members’ expertise in querying provision and results for the good of the pupils. The governing body ensures that statutory duties and guidance are upheld, for example in the good safeguarding of pupils, which is rooted in well-thought-out and robust policies and procedures. Similarly, the governing body has conducted a review of the school and local community in order to plan further enhancements to the existing good procedures for promoting community cohesion. Links with communities in different parts of the United Kingdom and overseas are good because the pupils themselves are increasingly involved in fostering contact with people elsewhere and thus, in understanding something of their faith, celebrations and lifestyles.

Because all ability groups make good progress and achieve well, and because there are the same opportunities for pupils to thrive personally and socially, it is evident

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that the school promotes equal opportunities well. There is no sign of intolerance or discrimination. The school is a very harmonious community which engages well with parents and carers in encouraging the greater welfare and achievement of pupils.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. A significant proportion of its staff are fairly new and have not the experience shown by the others. The leader of the stage is working successfully to share with them the same high expectations, consistent challenge and exciting learning provision that are strengths of the more established team. The quality of teaching is good and children’s welfare is well supported, so they feel safe and secure as they play and learn.

The children make good progress in both Nursery and Reception. Their willingness and enjoyment of learning are obvious. Nursery children’s happiness and joy in learning is fostered well in Little Robins sessions and also in main class activities. This extends to Reception where the children have great confidence in the staff and enjoy their company. As seen in an outstanding reception lesson, the emphasis on the children’s clarity of speaking and care in listening enabled them to make excellent progress in their work on letters and the sounds they make by stretching sounds in words such as pig and dig, thus aiding their knowledge and skill. Some writing by reception children is of the standard more often found in Year 1. The stage leader recognises that the next improvement area is to ensure there is the same high standard of experience in developing children’s literacy when working or playing in the much improved outside areas. Nevertheless, by the end of their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children’s attainment is above average in all areas of learning, including literacy and numeracy.



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*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

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

## Views of parents and carers

At about 50%, there was an above average return rate for the parents’ and carers’ questionnaires. Their responses are positive in the main and the school has a very good reputation among them, especially because of the changes and improvements brought about by the headteacher. Additionally, positive comments were made about the school’s ethos, the staff’s good work to foster improved attainment, the effective teaching, and the good care, support and guidance provided. Inspection evidence matches these thoughts.

A few concerns stand out in their written comments, chiefly relating to the information provided about their children’s work and progress, changes to the setting of ability groups and pupils’ safety among parked cars and the supervision when children arrive or depart from school. Inspectors consider that pupils make good progress and reassure parents and carers that senior leaders are determined to respond positively to their concerns about the information shared with them. The changes to the setting of pupils by ability group are already working well as part of the bid to further raise achievement in English and mathematics. Similarly, the school generally has good procedures to ensure the safety and security of pupils at all times and as inspection evidence shows, is working actively to improve car parking arrangements.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Blackwood 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 318 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 646 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	180	57	125	39	8	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	202	64	105	33	6	2	1	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	124	39	158	50	29	9	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	119	37	153	48	32	10	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	144	45	150	47	8	3	1	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	132	42	147	46	27	8	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	144	45	158	50	11	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)	143	45	144	45	7	2	1	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	129	41	146	46	27	8	4	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	108	34	167	53	8	3	13	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	96	30	166	52	29	9	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	140	44	152	48	4	1	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	166	52	130	41	11	3	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%. Percentages have been rounded.

## 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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**

26 September 2011

Dear Pupils



### **Inspection of Blackwood School, Sutton Coldfield B74 3PH**

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We were impressed with your politeness, care for others and behaviour. You were also interested in our work and made some useful points about what your school does well and what could be improved. We have used these ideas in making our judgements. Like you and your parents and carers, we think Blackwood School is a good one. It has a number of strengths.

- You make good progress and you do better than typically expected for your age.
- Your work in English is improving well and matches the quality of what you do in mathematics.
- Children in Nursery and Reception are enthusiastic learners and enjoy working and playing together. They too are making good progress.
- You feel safe and well looked after.
- You are well taught and eager to learn well.
- Your headteacher and staff expect you to do your best and to be well prepared for your next school. You do this with increasing success.

Two things stand out for further improvement.

- Your ideas for how to make learning even more successful and exciting could be used more frequently in lessons so you achieve even more.
- The governors of the school could make more detailed checks of how well you are learning in order to improve the school further.

You can help to make these improvements. Start by sharing your ideas about what makes a good lesson with your teachers, parents and carers.

Yours sincerely  
David Carrington

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