

Blurton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124002
Local authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	380771
Inspection dates	18–19 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Anthony O'Malley HMI

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	315
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Patricia Jones
Headteacher	Victoria Evans
Date of previous school inspection	22 June 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 20 lessons taught by 11 teachers. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including pupils' progress and attainment data, the school's planning documentation, policies, procedures and records. They reviewed information provided by parents and carers in 84 completed questionnaires and in conversations at the start of the school day. They also took into account the views of pupils and staff expressed in questionnaires they returned.

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

- How effective is the additional support the school provides for the high proportion of pupils it identifies as having special educational needs and/or disabilities?
- How successfully has the school responded to the areas for improvement in mathematics identified by Ofsted in June 2010?
- How effectively is the school improving attainment in writing?
- How effective is provision for pupils' whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable?

Information about the school

The school is larger than the average primary school. Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is twice the national average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much higher than average. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a Nursery and two Reception classes. The school has achieved a number of awards including Healthy Schools, Artsmark and Activemark.

A new headteacher took up post in September 2010. Following this appointment, the governing body appointed a new deputy headteacher.

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

This is a good school where pupils enjoy their lessons and get on well with one another. Their pride in singing '*The Blurton Family*' song in assembly reflects the very positive view they and their families hold about the school. Pupils make good progress. From often very low starting points, they gain skills in English and mathematics that are in line with the national averages by the time they leave at the end of Year 6. All groups achieve well, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These positive outcomes are the result of good whole-class teaching and effective additional provision to help pupils who are at risk of underachieving.

The majority of teaching is good. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, adults have caring relationships with the children and deliver an imaginative range of activities. In Years 1 to 6, effective use of the data gathered about pupils' attainment usually ensures that there is a close match between the activities set and the needs of groups and individual pupils. However, in a small number of satisfactory lessons, less account is taken of the pupils' earlier learning. When this happens, a minority of pupils struggle to respond to questions or tasks that are too challenging for them, or alternatively, some find the work too easy.

Attainment is higher in reading and mathematics than in writing. In reading, this reflects a strong focus on guided reading and effective one-to-one support for individuals. In mathematics, high-quality training has improved teachers' subject knowledge and practice. There is a strong focus now on pupils using and applying their skills as well as memorising basic number facts. However, written work in pupils' books indicates that throughout the school there are shortcomings in the pupils' grasp of sentence construction, spelling and handwriting. Pupils have targets to aim for, but often these do not focus precisely on skills that match their personal next steps in learning.

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding and often leads to individual pupils who are experiencing challenging circumstances, in school or at home, making exceptional progress in their learning and well-being. Not surprisingly, all parents and carers who responded to their questionnaire, or who spoke to inspectors, praised the steps the school takes to ensure their children feel outstandingly safe. The good curriculum has significant strengths. The nurture group is one of many examples of how the school adjusts provision to support pupils with highly specific needs.

In a little over one year, the headteacher has established an effective team of leaders and managers. She has the full confidence of parents and carers. Staff and the knowledgeable governing body are committed to further improvement. Self-evaluation is largely accurate and based on systematic monitoring and rigorous tracking of pupils' progress. It results in improvement planning that identifies appropriate priorities and demonstrates the school's good capacity to continue to secure improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing by ensuring that in each year group, staff:
 - focus on pupils acquiring writing skills appropriate to their age
 - give pupils precise targets in writing that match their individual needs
 - agree and implement a policy for handwriting.
- Increase still further the proportions of good and outstanding teaching and learning by ensuring that in all lessons the tasks set and the questions asked take full account of pupils' earlier learning and experiences.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Consistently good teaching in class and carefully targeted additional support for pupils at risk of underachieving ensure that all groups make good progress and some make outstanding progress. The school is particularly effective in raising the attainment of pupils in Year 3 to Year 6 who were performing below the national averages at the end of Key Stage 1. For example, all seven pupils with low attainment in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 made outstanding progress to gain the expected level in last year's national test for Year 6 pupils. Similarly, three quarters of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals gained the expected levels in English and mathematics. This is considerably higher than the national averages for this group.

Features of teaching observed contributing to these positive outcomes included brisk introductions to lessons that actively involved pupils and extended their understanding, and the imaginative choice of resources that motivated pupils. In all classes relationships were respectful, and these promoted good outcomes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities because they encouraged everyone to 'have a go' without fear of embarrassment. A range of intervention programmes, including a strategy supporting dyslexic pupils, is resulting in a significant number of individuals making outstanding progress. However, such accelerated progress is less evident for the more-able pupils in writing and only a few attain the highest levels at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

Pupils benefit from lessons, for example in science, that help them develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy. There is also a good range of curricular and extra-curricular activities that support their fitness and well-being. Pupils enjoy helping the smooth running of the school through a range of

responsibilities and have an increasing influence on decisions made about life in the school. Their views on what constitutes outstanding teaching and learning were valued contributions to the school's research aimed at improving practice. Their positive behaviour and considerate attitudes reflect their good moral and social development. Two school assemblies demonstrated the readiness of pupils to reflect and speak thoughtfully on their experiences. Over the last three years, attendance has been average. This is a rapidly improving area and attendance this year is currently above average. The pupils' average basic skills and attendance mean that they are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
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	2

How effective is the provision?

The best learning occurs when challenging activities capture the pupils' interest so they are keen to succeed. This was the case in a writing lesson that began with a focus on images of football supporters celebrating Stoke City's success. Brief drama activities helped the pupils reflect upon the emotions captured in the images. Following well-organised group work, the pupils composed very effective paragraphs that met the clear success criteria. In that lesson, lively discussion and opportunities for cooperative work successfully reinforced teaching points. However, in a small minority of lessons, there is a lack of active engagement and the focus is on completing tasks rather than on ensuring good learning takes place. This focus means that occasionally adults do not deal quickly with misconceptions as they prioritise delivering the planned lesson and that pupils with special educational needs and/or learning difficulties are over-directed to ensure that tasks are completed accurately.

The curriculum is well organised. Carefully chosen topics and links between subjects ensure pupils enjoy their lessons and promote successful learning and personal development. Pupils particularly value the good range of educational visits and residential experiences that broaden their horizons and inspire them with ambition for the future. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is

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

responsive to the wide range of needs within the school including physical disability, medical conditions, dyslexia and emotional difficulties. Case studies and data show very positive outcomes. One parent wrote, 'My child's progress has been remarkable...she has an individual education plan and within six months has almost caught up in all areas of learning. She is more independent and enjoys school.' Improvements to the school's resources for information and communication technology are beginning to increase the rather limited contribution that it makes to learning throughout the school day.

Outstanding features of the school's care, guidance and support include the arrangements for pupils moving from one stage of education to another and the work of the school's learning mentor and family link officer. The school's work with pupils and families facing challenging circumstances is having a very positive impact. The punctuality and attendance of targeted pupils are rapidly improving and families who have formerly been reluctant to work with the school as partners in their children's development now fully support the school's work with their children. The school's learning mentor makes daily checks on the incident books kept by midday staff and class teachers, making sure that he can provide immediate additional support for troubled pupils. Equally impressive is the readiness of the school to buy in expertise when it recognises that specialist help will benefit its pupils. All such initiatives are carefully evaluated for value for money.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

All staff, including support staff, belong to leadership teams and this ensures that all share the headteacher's firm commitment to continuous improvement and her ambition to achieve the best possible outcomes for pupils. Together the staff track closely the progress of pupils and implement action plans that are successfully raising attainment and increasing progress. Leaders conduct lesson observations, but checks on the work in pupils' books are infrequent. This means that inconsistencies in the implementation of school policies are not always identified quickly. A supportive governing body fulfils its role effectively. It gathers first-hand evidence about the school's performance, for example, through visits to classrooms and by looking at work in books. These activities enable it to provide both support and challenge to the school's leaders.

Parents and carers appreciate all that is done to support their children's welfare. They are supported in their role as partners in their children's education through regular newsletters, electronic communications, meetings and questionnaires. The school complies fully with statutory requirements for safeguarding, health and safety and child protection. Its inclusive ethos supports the good promotion of equal opportunities. All staff are aware of the attainment and progress of the different

groups in their class. This helps them identify where additional provision is required and raises the attainment of groups who underachieve nationally. However, the school is aware that there is scope to improve the outcomes of the most-able pupils. Pupils, parents and carers from minority-ethnic groups confirm that the school tackles well the rare instances of racist name calling. The school contributes effectively to community cohesion, particularly through its involvement in community activities.

These are the grades for the 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

Staff work together well to provide a range of experiences that enable the children to settle quickly, learn the daily routines and mix with one another. Any children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early on and are well supported through activities that match their stages of personal development and communication skills. All children make good progress developing their social skills. They cooperate and relate well to others. Their behaviour is good and they feel safe because of the confidence they have in the staff to give them help and support. By the end of Reception, most are confident when choosing learning activities and are able to apply themselves to tasks for a good length of time. However, despite good progress, a minority do not reach the expected skill levels in important areas such as writing, calculating, and knowledge and understanding of the world by the start of Year 1.

Planning shows a good balance of activities across the areas of learning. Outdoor space for Reception children is limited but children can use the Key Stage 1 playground if required. Indoor, activities are being delivered this term from newly-built areas. The leadership team is reviewing how best to use the increased space to ensure adults can support independent activities that extend learning.

Adults make thorough assessments of each child’s progress but parents and carers make only a limited contribution to these. Questionnaire responses and discussions with parents and carers provide strong evidence of their high level of satisfaction with provision and the quality of leadership and management. They particularly value the home visits made as part of the induction process.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who returned questionnaires was slightly below average. The great majority of those who responded to the questionnaire have positive views about their children’s experiences at the school. A small number of respondents added comments to their forms. These again were mostly very supportive of the school. For example, comments noted how, ‘staff always went the extra mile for pupils’ and how there was, ‘a real sense of community’. The inspection evidence confirmed these views. A few comments did raise minor concerns. There was no pattern to the issues raised. All of these issues were shared with the headteacher without compromising confidentiality.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Blurton 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 84 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 315 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	59	70	21	25	3	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	59	70	23	27	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	44	52	38	45	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	48	57	28	33	3	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	55	65	25	30	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	44	52	36	43	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	38	45	40	48	2	2	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)	47	56	31	37	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	54	64	24	29	3	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	44	52	31	37	3	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	52	33	39	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	57	68	24	29	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	58	69	22	26	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	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 is 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).

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.



20 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blurton Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST3 3AZ

You may remember that I recently visited your school with two other inspectors. I would like to thank all of you for making us so welcome and for being so polite and helpful. We had the chance to talk with many of you and it was pleasing to hear how much you enjoy school. You like your teachers and helpers, and you always try to do your best.

You go to a good school. It is a happy place for you to learn and grow together. You are well behaved and polite. Good teaching is helping you all to make good progress so that you leave the school with the skills expected of 11-year-olds. We judged that the care the school takes of you is outstanding and it helps you all to feel very safe at school. This care is particularly important for those of you who have difficulties in school or at home, because it means that with the school's help problems can be resolved and you can achieve well in your lessons.

Your headteacher, the staff and the governing body are keen to make Blurton Primary even more successful and I have asked them to do a number of things that will help you all to become better writers and will increase the number of good and outstanding lessons.

You can all help by continuing to do your best and by making sure that you attend school as regularly as possible. I know that the headteacher and the staff ask for your views about the school and listen to your ideas. Do continue to use these opportunities to share your views about the best things in the school and any areas that could be even better.

Yours sincerely

Anthony O'Malley
Her Majesty's Inspector

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