

Blackthorn Primary School

Waingrove, Blackthorn, Northampton, NN3 8EP

Inspection dates

1–2 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 were exceptionally low in 2013. Too many pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 are not making enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is inadequate because teachers do not have high enough expectations. Some teachers do not manage behaviour well enough and pupils are spending too long on some tasks. Some teaching is dull.
- Some assessments of pupils' work have not been accurate.
- Some work has not been marked often enough. Where comments have been made, they are not helping pupils to improve.
- Leaders have not checked sufficiently the accuracy of teachers' assessments on pupils' progress and attainment. Some leaders have an overly positive view of the progress that pupils make.
- Neither the governors, nor the academy sponsor, have looked closely enough at how additional funding received by the academy is being used to improve learning for groups of pupils and to increase participation in sporting activities.
- Behaviour and safety require improvement. There is some silly behaviour at lunchtime and break time. A few pupils find it hard to concentrate during lessons.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils do well in the Nursery and Reception classes. They get off to a good start and make good progress.
- There is a good range of clubs and trips which help to add interest to learning.
- Some recently appointed staff have quickly made accurate assessments of the improvements that are needed. They have taken actions which are leading to change.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 20 part lessons. Seven of the lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher or the deputy headteacher. Inspectors also heard groups of pupils read.
- Inspectors held meetings with academy leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the academy sponsor. Meetings were held with groups of pupils and informal discussions also took place with different pupils at lunchtime and break times.
- There were insufficient responses to the online parent survey, Parent View, to create any published information about parents' views of the school. Inspectors held informal discussions with a small number of parents who brought their children to school and looked at the analysis the academy had carried out of its informal questioning of parents before school. In addition, inspectors considered the views of the nine members of staff who returned the staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors observed the academy's work and looked at a range of documentation, including the academy's self-evaluation, the academy development plan, minutes of governing body meetings, academy sponsor minutes, safeguarding policies, attendance figures, and bullying and behaviour records. Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work from across the academy and compared them to the academy's current assessment records. They also looked at information about children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils' progress over time.

Inspection team

David Bray, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

David Westall

Additional Inspector

Carol Worthington

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- Blackthorn Primary is a larger than average-sized school.
- The academy was established in December 2012. It is sponsored by The Education Fellowship Trust.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion from minority ethnic groups and the numbers who speak English as an additional language are above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in local authority care, is above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The academy has specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs in the form of a Designated Special Provision (DSP) unit for pupils with behavioural difficulties. The provision has space for 12 pupils. There are currently four pupils at the unit, all of them on the school's roll. The local authority is responsible for this unit and has recently confirmed that the provision will be decommissioned in the near future.
- The academy does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Since January 2014, the sponsor has arranged additional, part-time, support for the academy from the headteacher of South End Junior School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that all groups of pupils in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 make better progress by ensuring that:
 - teachers assess work accurately and have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - teaching enables all pupils, including the most-able pupils and those who have special educational needs, to make sufficient progress in lessons
 - marking is carried out regularly, provides advice on how to improve, and teachers check whether pupils are using this information to improve their work.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders check that assessment information collected by the academy is accurate
 - additional funding for the pupil premium and sports activities are being used effectively enough and checks on their impact by governors and the academy sponsor are regular and rigorous
 - the arrangements for teaching literacy and numeracy across the academy are strong enough to result in pupils making rapid progress.

■ Improve the behaviour of pupils by:

- ensuring that the academy’s behaviour policy is used consistently by all staff
- ensuring that pupils take pride in their work and its presentation
- improving lessons so they are interesting and stimulating enough to capture the enthusiasm of all pupils.

An external review of governance, including the academy’s use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Achievement is inadequate because pupils have not made enough progress during their time in the academy. Their attainment in the 2013 Key Stage 2 national tests was exceptionally low. Current achievement in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is low. The academy did not meet the government's floor standards in 2013.
- In 2013, the assessment of the writing of Year 6 pupils made by teachers was significantly higher than the results they actually achieved in the national tests for reading, spelling, punctuation and grammar. Work in books shows that these assessments were not accurate and pupils did not make enough progress in writing in either Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2.
- Too few of the most-able pupils are reaching higher levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. This is because the work they are given to do is often not hard enough.
- In 2013, the proportion of pupils in Year 1 achieving the expected level in the national screening check in phonics (letters and the sounds they make) was below average.
- The proportion of pupils in Year 6 who make expected or better than expected progress in English and mathematics is low. Current academy data indicate that there may be an improvement in 2014 but progress will still be below last year's national average in English and mathematics. Work in books confirms that progress across Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is too slow.
- Pupils' current work shows that all groups of pupils are underachieving in English and mathematics across the academy. This includes those who speak English as an additional language. Pupils from minority ethnic groups do better than those from a White British background.
- Pupils' attainment at Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics is below average. They are not building well on the good start they make in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- In 2013, there was a gap of around two terms in the attainment of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding and their classmates in writing. The gap was only about a term in reading and there was no gap in mathematics. However, this reflects the very low attainment of all pupils rather than good progress on the part of those eligible for the pupil premium. In mathematics and reading, those eligible for the pupil premium were more than four terms behind similar pupils nationally. The funding, which is used to provide eligible pupils with additional support and teaching in small groups, is not having sufficient effect on improving their progress.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have made inadequate progress. Although in some individual and small-group sessions they do better, they are not sustaining this progress in lessons. Pupils in the DSP unit are not making enough progress, despite the high level of supervision and support they receive. This is because expectations are not high enough.
- The progress of some pupils has been faster during the last few weeks because some teachers have expected more of pupils. However, this improvement is very recent and not evident across all classes. As a result, it has only had a limited impact.
- Children start in the Nursery with skills and capabilities well below the levels expected for their ages and they make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the end of the

Reception Year, many are close to expectations for their age.

The quality of teaching is inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate because it has not led to pupils making enough progress across most classes in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- Pupils' books show that teachers' expectations are not high enough. Pupils are often working too slowly, not completing work and are not always expected to take sufficient pride in their work.
- Some lessons are not made interesting for the pupils. As a result pupils lose focus on their work, or do not take enough care over what they are doing.
- Marking is often not regular enough. Where it does take place, there is insufficient help provided to pupils on how they can improve. Teachers do not routinely expect pupils to correct work or improve the next piece of work.
- Expectations for the most-able pupils are not high enough and they often end up working on the same tasks as other pupils. They find some work too easy and not interesting enough.
- Inadequate teaching of the skills of writing and numeracy has led to slow learning and progress in these areas. Evidence from pupils' books and the academy's data show that teachers' assessments have not been accurate.
- The teaching of reading and phonics is inadequate because not enough pupils are reaching the higher levels by the end of Key Stage 2 or achieving success in the Year 1 phonics check.
- Teaching and support for pupils eligible for the pupil premium has not been effective in helping these pupils to make the progress they should, especially at Key Stage 2.
- Teaching and support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is inadequate. Although pupils often do better in some individual and small-group sessions, they are not making sufficient progress in lessons over time. Teaching in the DSP unit does not ensure that expectations for these pupils are high enough.
- Good teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is enabling children to make a good start when they join the academy.
- There have been some very recent improvements in aspects of teaching. Work seen in books and during lessons shows that some pupils and classes are starting to make better progress. These changes are too recent to have enabled them to catch up and there are still too many lessons where progress is not good enough.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. A few pupils do not always have positive attitudes to learning, especially when they find work is too easy or not interesting. Some staff do not use the academy's policy for managing behaviour consistently enough.
- Pupils in the DSP unit follow academy expectations for behaviour in lessons but some find it difficult to behave well during lunchtime and break time because they are not as closely

supervised. For some pupils, the provision is contributing positively to them being able to stay in school rather than being excluded.

- Most pupils are usually polite and courteous as they move around the academy and, in the majority of lessons, they behave as expected, listen carefully to staff and follow instructions.
- The behaviour of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. They settle into routines quickly, stay safe and are eager to learn and participate in activities.
- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. Pupils say they feel safe around the site. However, they feel that lunchtimes and break times are not always as orderly as they would like.
- Pupils are developing an understanding of the dangers of using social networking sites and mobile phones safely. Some say they encounter cyber-bullying outside the academy but the school guides them in how to keep safe.
- There are few recorded incidents of bullying. In discussion, pupils said that, although bullying was rare, the behaviour of a few pupils can be silly, especially at lunchtime and break time. There have been a small number of racist incidents recorded over the last school year. The academy has recorded these carefully and taken decisive action to eradicate such situations.
- Attendance is below average but has improved over the last year as a result of effective actions taken by the academy. The academy's attendance figures are negatively affected by the relatively high number of local families who are in temporary accommodation and who move without informing the academy. Most but not all pupils arrive punctually and well prepared for lessons.
- The academy is clean and well maintained. No parents spoken to by inspectors had concerns about pupils' safety or well-being.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leadership has not managed to raise attainment fast enough, especially at Key Stage 2. Recent and robust actions have been taken to try to improve the quality of teaching. This has not yet ensured that pupils are achieving as well as can be expected from their different starting points.
- The academy should not appoint newly qualified teachers.
- The academy's leaders do not have a realistic enough view of how well it is performing. They have not taken sufficient account of pupils' learning over time and senior leaders have not ensured that assessment information is accurate.
- Targets have been set for teachers' performance, and leaders have recently demanded that teachers expect more of their pupils. This change has contributed to the relatively high levels of staff changes but has not yet led to improved learning and progress in all classes. There have, however, been some very recent improvements in teaching. However, these are fragile and have yet to have a strong effect.
- Although leaders regularly check teaching, they have not taken sufficient account of the impact of teaching on the learning of different groups such as the most-able pupils and those eligible

for the pupil premium. Leaders and governors have not ensured that the additional funding for the pupil premium has accelerated the progress of eligible pupils.

- The academy's subject leaders are all very new. Subject leaders have carried out rapid evaluations of areas that require improvement but have not been in post long enough to improve provision. The leadership of the DSP unit has not ensured that pupils make sufficient progress.
- The academy has used additional sports funding to provide multi-skills sessions at lunchtime and after school. There has been no evaluation of how effective this provision has been in developing pupils' fitness or healthy life-styles.
- The range of subjects and topics provides an appropriate emphasis on developing the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, although these are not used well enough across different subjects. There is a good range of opportunities which enrich pupils' learning. These include visits to local places of interest, residential visits and lunchtime and after-school clubs.
- Arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements. Although the academy seeks to promote equality of opportunity, its success is limited because all groups of pupils currently underachieve and are not well prepared for secondary school.
- The academy sponsor has recently provided appropriate support and challenge for the academy. An experienced local headteacher has been deployed to provide additional support and the sponsor has accurately reviewed aspects of the academy's current performance. These evaluations have contributed to recent changes and early signs of improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are all new to their role and the Chair of the Governing Body was confirmed in an interim role in April 2014. Governors have limited levels of delegation and are not clear enough about their responsibilities. They bring a good range of skills and experience from business but are too new to have brought about improvements at the academy. Most of the functions of governance are retained by the academy trust. The trust has recently provided strong challenge and support for school leaders. Neither the governors nor the sponsor have given enough attention to ensuring that additional funding for the pupil premium is leading to better progress. There has been no evaluation of how well additional sports funding has been used to ensure that pupils develop healthier lifestyles and improved fitness. Arrangements for managing the performance of staff are still at an early stage of development: plans have yet to be implemented linking teachers' pay rises to the progress of their pupils. The academy does not currently provide information on its website about the effectiveness of pupil premium funding, sports funding or other information for parents, such as on admissions.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	138984
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	440132

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	454
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Louise Fermor
Headteacher	Debonair Sherman
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01604 407254
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