

Blaby Thistly Meadow Primary School

Hospital Lane, Blaby, Leicester, Leicestershire LE8 4FE

Inspection dates

13–14 December 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The charismatic leadership team provides a focused and determined drive for improvement. Leaders have an accurate view of the school's areas for development. They are taking effective action to make improvements.
- Leaders' precise use of assessment has ensured that all staff have a good understanding of what pupils can achieve. Teachers use this information well to plan for pupils' next steps in learning.
- The curriculum is rich and diverse. Pupils have a wealth of opportunities to develop their skills. Leaders have ensured that teachers use science, the arts and humanities as a foundation for exciting and stimulating learning.
- Children get a good start to their education in the Reception Year. Good teaching means they are well prepared for Year 1.
- Staff have a good understanding of pupils' needs. Well-targeted support for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities means these pupils make good progress.
- Pupils are exceptionally well behaved and well mannered. The school's values and the rich curriculum ensure that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Teachers and leaders understand the need to promote pupils' physical health. Teachers work with sports coaches to provide pupils with high-quality teaching of sport and physical education (PE).
- Subject leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development in their subject. They have developed accurate action plans but are not always clear what impact their actions are having on standards.
- Teachers encourage pupils to challenge themselves in different subjects. Teachers' planning does not always allow the most able pupils to develop and extend their learning. Because of this, some of the most able pupils are not making the progress they should.
- Teaching assistants help pupils to develop their skills across the curriculum. Sometimes, however, they do not help pupils to develop their understanding well enough, including in the early years.
- The teaching of phonics is inconsistent. Some adults do not say sounds in their pure form. This leads to pupils being unclear about the correct pronunciation.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning and accelerate progress by ensuring that:
 - teachers use assessment information more sharply to plan challenging work for the most able pupils
 - teaching assistants have high expectations and use questioning to develop and deepen pupils' understanding
 - staff gain a better understanding of phonics sounds, so that phonics is taught consistently.
- Improve leadership and management by developing the role of subject leaders so they have a greater understanding of the impact of their work on raising standards in their subject.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Members of the dynamic senior leadership team have an accurate understanding of the school's areas for development. Leaders are reflective about the work they have already done to raise standards. They are determined in their drive to make further improvements.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher monitor the professional development of staff carefully. Information about how well pupils are doing is used by the headteacher to hold teachers to account. Professional development for staff is linked to the school's development priorities and pupils' progress.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils. They have targeted the extra funding for disadvantaged pupils effectively to ensure that individual needs are met. These pupils are making at least good progress. In some instances it is rapid.
- Leaders responsible for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have a good understanding of the needs of the pupils. They swiftly put support in place. These pupils make good, and in some instances rapid, progress relative to their starting points. Leaders are quick to seek additional support from external agencies when required.
- Leaders provide pupils with a wide range of sporting activities to develop their physical health and well-being. They use the additional funds provided through the primary PE and sport premium to ensure that all pupils take part in extra-curricular sport. Leaders have targeted pupils who may not usually take part in physical exercise to raise with them the importance of a healthy lifestyle.
- The curriculum is rich and diverse. Science, humanities and the arts are used as a foundation for pupils' learning. Mathematics and English are taught across these subjects. The school uses homework to develop pupils' enthusiasm for learning outside of school. Teachers encourage pupils to complete their own investigations or research linked to a current topic. For example, some pupils carried out simple science experiments in their kitchens and others built models of the Colosseum.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted across the curriculum. Leaders encourage pupils to think about their future and what they want to be when they leave school. Staff coach pupils in upper key stage 2 to develop their understanding of what life is like in modern Britain. Learning covers, for example, the cost of running a home, how to apply for jobs and examples of some of the jobs available.
- The senior leadership team has ensured that all staff share a vision for the school. Subject leaders are committed to bringing about improvements in their subject. They are well led and directed by the senior leadership team but they are not always clear about the impact their actions have had on raising standards.

Governance of the school

- Governors are ambitious for the school. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They keep a close check on how well pupils are doing through regular meetings with leaders and visits to the school. The governing body is effective in holding leaders to account.
- The safeguarding of pupils is well understood by governors. The governing body carries out regular checks of the school's systems. Through an annual audit, it ensures that the school is compliant with national guidance.
- The governing body monitors the spending of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Governors have a good understanding of how extra funding has accelerated the progress of these pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have ensured that systems for recording and tracking safeguarding concerns are robust and precise. The designated safeguarding leads have a comprehensive overview of safeguarding concerns. They are quick to follow up concerns and put in place support when required. Staff track and follow up any referrals made to external agencies.
- Leaders have ensured that adults at the school have a clear understanding of their responsibility to safeguard pupils. Staff, governors, volunteers and agency staff receive frequent training and termly updates on safeguarding matters. Staff who spoke to inspectors, including lunchtime and office staff, had a clear understanding of the different types of abuse they might encounter. They knew the procedures they would follow, were they to have a concern about a child.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers plan exciting and stimulating learning that interests pupils. They develop pupils' English and mathematics skills well across the curriculum. Teachers encourage pupils to make the links between subjects. Pupils use, for example, mathematics and problem-solving skills in science and geography, and develop their writing in history.
- Class reading books are chosen carefully to link to the current topic, to challenge pupils' thinking and to develop their reading skills. For example, pupils in Year 6 were learning about life during the Second World War at the same time as they were reading 'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas'.
- Teachers use cross-curricular links and good-quality texts to develop pupils' writing skills. They encourage pupils to use what they know about grammar, spelling and punctuation when they write in subjects across the curriculum. Teachers use skilled questioning to develop pupils' ideas and to think about the content of their writing. For example, pupils in Year 3 empathised with rich and poor people in ancient Egypt and used this reflection to add style and structure to their writing.
- The teaching of mathematics focuses on building skills systematically as pupils develop their confidence. Teachers plan carefully to provide pupils with problem-solving and

reasoning activities. They encourage pupils to try things on their own using the skills they already have to develop resilience. Sometimes, teachers do not set challenging enough tasks for more able pupils.

- In science, teachers give pupils opportunities to develop their own theories and draw conclusions based on evidence. Teachers encourage pupils to solve problems and to try things out when carrying out experiments. They ask pupils to reflect on what went well and what they would do differently in the future. For example, pupils in Year 5 were required to adapt their experiment when they realised that it was not a fair test.
- Teachers have a good understanding of the abilities of disadvantaged pupils. They plan carefully to ensure that activities meet their needs. Staff use one-to-one and small-group teaching to target individual pupils' areas for development, as well as focused teaching in class. Teachers and leaders carefully monitor the needs of these pupils and quickly put support in place. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are making good, and in some instances rapid, progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide effective support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Plans to support and develop their skills are clearly matched to their needs, and are carefully monitored by leaders. These pupils make good, and in some instances rapid, progress.
- Teachers use assessment information well to plan tasks that meet pupils' needs. Sometimes the tasks they set are not challenging enough for the most able pupils. On these occasions, the most able pupils do not make as much progress as they should.
- The use of teaching assistants across the school is not consistent. Sometimes teaching assistants do not give pupils enough time to work things out before they intervene. Pupils are not always given enough opportunities to develop their skills during small group work. Some teaching assistants' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough.
- The teaching of phonics in the early years and key stage 1 is not consistent. Some adults do not use pure sounds and, as a result, pupils are taught incorrectly. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to practise sounds, decode words or to read books together.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and take pride in their work. Pupils are excited about their learning and enjoy the varied curriculum, the different topics and the many opportunities the school has to offer. Pupils are developing resilience in their learning. Teachers provide them with opportunities to try things out and to use their problem-solving skills across the curriculum.
- Pupils understand the school's values, and how these relate to the choices they make every day. Pupils have good understanding of fundamental British values. Staff encourage pupils to think about their place in the world, as well as in the local area. For example, all pupils took part in a project to learn about refugees. Pupils in Year 1

built shelters and experienced what it might be like to live in one. Older pupils researched the difficult journeys refugees take, and how to empathise with their plight.

- Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to learn about different lifestyles, cultures and religions. Through the broad and rich curriculum, pupils learn about how they are different from but also the same as other people locally and across the globe.
- Pupils are encouraged to think about their future when they leave school. People who have a range of different jobs visit the school to tell pupils about their professions. Pupils cook regularly, making full meals by the time they reach Year 6. They think about how much it costs to run a household and how much a house costs to buy or rent. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' conduct around the school is exceptional. Pupils are polite and courteous. They are confident and happy to talk to adults about their learning and what interests them.
- Pupils and parents believe that incidents of bullying and discriminatory language are very rare. Pupils believe that, if there are any incidents of poor behaviour, they are dealt with swiftly and effectively by adults. Positive behaviour and tolerance of others are a cornerstone of the curriculum.
- Pupils behave well in lessons. They complete tasks diligently and work cooperatively. Occasionally pupils become distracted from their learning when their tasks are not challenging enough. As a result, some pupils do not make as much progress as they should.
- Pupils understand the importance of regular attendance at school. The school's rate of attendance is above the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard at the end of key stage 2 has risen and was above the national average in each of writing and mathematics in 2016 and 2017. When compared with pupils nationally, pupils in Year 6 made good progress in writing and mathematics in 2016 and 2017.
- In reading, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard at the end of key stage 2 was below the national average in 2016 and 2017. Pupils in Year 6, including the most able pupils, did not make as much progress as similar pupils nationally. These pupils did not make good progress. However, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard is rising and, in 2017, pupils made good progress when compared with previous years and pupils nationally.
- Disadvantaged pupils are catching up with other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. At the end of key stage 2 in 2017, they nearly made as much progress from their starting points as did other pupils nationally. Pupils' workbooks show that there is no discernible difference in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school.

- Pupils who have SEN and or/disabilities are well supported and receive teaching that is focused on their needs. As a result, these pupils make good, and in some cases rapid, progress.
- In key stage 1, the proportions of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics were above the national average in 2016 and 2017.
- Pupils' workbooks show that across the curriculum, including in English and mathematics, most pupils are making at least good progress. Sometimes, the most able pupils are not provided with enough challenge in English and mathematics. These pupils do not always make the progress they are capable of.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check fell to below the national average in 2017.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years teacher ensures that children and their families have a welcoming and well-planned start to school. Families are provided with information before their children begin school to ensure that transition is smooth. Children settle well.
- The early years teacher has formed good relationships with the 12 pre-school providers where children attend before starting school. This ensures that school staff have a clear view of children's needs and interests before they start.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are well supported. Staff quickly assess their needs and put in place the relevant support. These pupils make at least good progress.
- Parents value highly the quality of teaching and care which their children receive in the Reception Year. They clearly view it as a strength of the school.
- Children play well together and look after the resources well. They are keen to talk to each other and to adults about what they are learning.
- The proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development by the end of the early years is in line with the national average. A large majority of pupils leave the foundation stage well prepared for key stage 1.
- Occasionally, adults do not deal with children's misconceptions about how to form letters correctly and do not praise clearly enough. As a result, children are not always clear about what they have done well or what they need to get even better at.
- In the classroom, children are provided with a range of opportunities to extend their learning. Some adults use prompts and questions effectively to develop children's understanding. Others, however, focus on children completing the task rather than deepening their understanding.

School details

Unique reference number	119956
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10037613

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Edwards
Headteacher	Colin Bowpitt
Telephone number	0116 277 5648
Website	www.thistlymeadow.net/
Email address	office@thistlymeadow.leics.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–3 October 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Blaby Thistly Meadow Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The headteacher is the executive headteacher of two schools: Blaby Thistly Meadow Primary School and Greenfield Primary School.
- The majority of pupils are of white British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is well below the national average.
- In 2017, the school met the government's floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations of pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at

the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes and across a range of subjects, including the teaching of early reading and phonics. Some lesson observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Inspectors heard pupils read and talked with pupils about the school. The inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work in all year groups to gain a view of the effectiveness of teaching over time.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, subject and middle leaders, and members of the governing body.
- The inspectors spoke with parents informally and also considered the 45 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspectors looked at a range of the school's documentation, including: its self-evaluation and plans for improvement; information on the attainment and progress of current pupils; information relating to safeguarding and to health and safety, the most recent attendance data; and minutes from meetings of the governing body.
- The inspectors considered the range and quality of information provided on the school's website.
- The lead inspector scrutinised the school's procedures for recruiting new staff and its records of recruitment checks on staff and volunteers.

Inspection team

Helen Williams, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Clare Cossor	Ofsted Inspector
Mandy Wilding	Ofsted Inspector

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