



Blanford Mere Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103792
LEA Dudley
Inspection number 276993
Inspection dates 7 November 2005 to 8 November 2005
Reporting inspector Paul Sadler RISP

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Mimosa Walk
School category	Community		Kingswinford
Age range of pupils	5 to 11		West Midlands DY6 7EA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01384 818365
Number on roll	262	Fax number	01384 818366
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Allan Weaver
Date of previous inspection	6 November 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Nikki Miller

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Blanford Mere Primary School serves an area of mainly private housing on the edge of the West Midlands urban area. The area has average levels of socio-economic disadvantage. Pupils entering the school have broadly average skills and abilities. The proportion with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average although the number with statements of special need is average. The proportion of pupils of minority ethnic heritage is low and there are currently no pupils who do not speak English at home. Historically, the school has educated children from the travelling community, sometimes in quite large numbers, but the number of such children currently at the school is small.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school that its overall effectiveness is good, and that it provides good value for money. There are outstanding features, notably the care and guidance pupils receive and the extent to which staff know and respond to each pupil's needs. As a result, pupils greatly enjoy their education. The schools' partnership with parents is outstanding and the governors are responding to the need for more extended care by planning for after-school provision. This also reflects the very clear direction in which leaders are taking the development of the school. The school knows each child's needs and challenges them to achieve their best, while responding well to individual circumstances, such as those of travellers and those with learning difficulties or disabilities. Attendance, which is satisfactory, could be improved further although the school is already taking action in this area. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well and is taking action to improve, for instance, pupils' writing skills. The school has improved since the last inspection and undoubtedly has good capacity to make further improvements.

Children are given a very good start through the 'Squirrels' induction programme and receive a good education in the Reception class, an improvement since the previous inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- work with parents to enable them to understand the importance of a continuous learning experience for pupils
- build further on already good standards by taking forward existing work, for instance to improve writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Reception class, particularly in learning how to read and write and in their personal development. By the time they start Year 1, their skills in most areas of learning are slightly above those expected.

Pupils make sound progress in Years 1 and 2. For the last few years, the school's results at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics have been just above the national average. The most recent results show good improvement in reading, indicating that staff training and the reorganisation of resources and the timetable for reading have been effective in raising standards.

Pupils make good progress in Years 3 to 6. The school's national test results in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 have been above the national average for a number of years. Contributory factors to pupils' good achievement are the very good systems for tracking pupils' progress and the organisation of pupils in Years 3 to 5 into ability groups which help staff to be fully aware of what pupils need to do to improve. The school's systems ensure that any underachievement is quickly identified

and rectified, and that good support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities to enable them to make good progress.

The school sets itself challenging targets. They act as a good stimulus for improvement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good, with very strong features. The way in which pupils are introduced to school through the 'Squirrels Club' is excellent as is the transition of Year 6 pupils to their secondary schools. Pupils' enjoyment of school is outstanding. Behaviour is always good and the independence and social skills shown by the Reception and Infant pupils are remarkable.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There are good opportunities for pupils to reflect upon their own and others' feelings and beliefs. A strong moral code is promoted through consistent high expectations and use of rewards. Nevertheless, pupils understand the consequences of misbehaviour. Awareness of different cultures is raised through events and visitors; however, more could be done to prepare pupils for life in a multicultural society. Attendance is average. Action has been taken to improve it but the number who take holidays during school time is still too high. Pupils' views are listened to but there is as yet no school council to give pupils an early experience of democracy at work. Healthy living is promoted through a very good programme for pupils' personal, social and health education. Pupils are encouraged to be active and they know about healthy diets. Unfortunately, this has yet to be fully adopted by all pupils. Chocolate, crisps and even sweets are eaten at playtime and lunchtime. Pupils make a very good contribution to the community. A recent activity raised funds to purchase 22 goats for people in Africa, the target having been two goats!

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's assessment that teaching is good. Teachers know the pupils well and this means that work is planned to meet their needs, for example by concentrating on reading patterns that the pupil finds difficult. The intensive start provided for the youngest children by the 'Squirrels' programme means that pupils' strengths and weaknesses are known from the start.

The school makes good use of individual and external expertise in its teaching. Examples include the skills of the physical education coordinator and of external expertise in music. A lesson in which the entire Year 2 class were taught to play the violin by a teacher from the local music service was outstanding.

Teachers make good use of assessment. Test and other results are analysed by the deputy headteacher and the analysis is shared with staff. After consideration of other

factors affecting the child's education, targets are set for individuals. These are very specific, for example 'learn the effect of multiplying by 10 and 100 on place value'.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good, balanced and well-planned curriculum which enables pupils to acquire a good range of key skills and develop real interest in subjects such as art and history. The curriculum is adapted well to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. Good emphasis is placed on raising pupils' awareness of healthy lifestyles and safe practices. A particular strength is the very good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Well-supported after-school clubs, visits to places of interest, visitors to the school, special events and subject focus weeks all contribute significantly to pupils' enjoyment of school and add other dimensions to their learning. Opportunities to develop musical skills are outstanding. The school's big band rehearsal indicated the depth of musical talent within the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support provided is outstanding. Pupils feel safe and are not anxious about being bullied or harassed. They know that if they have any worries, these will be dealt with. Great care and attention is paid to concerns raised by parents about their children and this is reflected in the very high regard in which parents hold the school. An outstanding strength of the school is the attention paid to the welfare of every individual. Senior staff work with teachers to continually review the progress and needs of every child.

Pupils are encouraged to work towards challenging targets in the classroom but great care is taken not to make them anxious about it. Parents are fully involved in this process. The systems to review the progress of pupils with disabilities or special educational needs are excellent. The care shown towards any pupils regarded as vulnerable and the support given to their families is another significant strength.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and have outstanding features. The headteacher and governors have a clear vision for the school at the heart of the community. The new Foundation Stage building, paid for entirely by the school, was planned to provide a better base for the younger children. In the long term it may also be used for a nursery because 'it's what parents want'. There is also a commitment to develop the full range of the child's personality, for instance through residential experiences, music and the arts. Resources are used effectively and with imagination to raise standards, and the school provides good value for money.

The school's performance is monitored effectively by senior staff, and appropriate targets are set. On the few occasions when these are not met, the reason is identified and action is taken to put this right, as with the project to improve older pupils' writing skills. Staff and governors are committed to helping all pupils to achieve and the support given to those who are vulnerable is reflected in the outstanding care, guidance and support that all pupils receive.

The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well and is starting to analyse these more rigorously with the involvement of parents, governors and other stakeholders. Effective action has been taken since the last inspection, for instance to improve provision for the Reception class. Overall, improvement has been good and the school also has good capacity to improve further.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

The inspectors who visited your school very much enjoyed talking and listening to you and seeing your work. We want to thank you for spending the time to do this. This letter is to tell you what we thought of your school and how it can be even better.

We think Blanford Mere is a good primary school because:

- lessons are interesting and help you to do well and reach good standards.
- the teachers tell you how to improve your work and they set sensible targets.
- there are lots of exciting things to do such as music and trips out of school.
- you behave well and there is very little bullying.
- the teachers get on very well with your parents.
- you are very well cared for and are taught how to stay healthy and safe.
- you care about people in the world and do something to help, such as raising money to buy 22 goats for people in Africa.

We think the school could improve even more if:

- all the pupils came to school everyday except when they are ill.
- teachers carry on helping you to make your work even better, such as by improving your writing skills.