

# Bleakhouse Junior School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 103934           |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Sandwell         |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 286811           |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 9–10 May 2007    |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | David Carrington |

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

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|   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Junior                                |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Community                             |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 7–11                                  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed                                 |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |                                       |
| School                                    | 234                                   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body                    |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Marilyn Roe                           |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | John Bates                            |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 14 October 2002                       |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Bleakhouse Road<br>Oldbury<br>B68 9DS |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 0121 4222841                          |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 0121 4229895                          |

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|--------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Age group</b>         | 7–11          |
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Bleakhouse Junior School is larger than most other primary schools. Most of the pupils come from the local area and are from White British backgrounds. Almost all pupils speak English as their main language. Some families experience challenging social and economic circumstances. A third of the pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities. When pupils start in Year 3 their attainment is typically below average. There have been significant changes to senior leadership. The headteacher has been in post for nearly two years and the deputy headteacher for one.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Bleakhouse Junior School is popular amongst its pupils and parents. It provides a satisfactory and rapidly improving education for the pupils following a dip in results last year. Good leadership and management have ensured that standards and achievement have recovered quickly and that the inadequate teaching experienced by some pupils has been eliminated. There has been a spirited approach to improvement in mathematics and writing and the quality of teaching has improved substantially as a result.

Pupils make satisfactory progress through the school and standards are a little below average at the end of Year 6. Teaching quality is satisfactory and continues to improve. Progress is good when the work is focused sharply on pupils' different needs, as found in the Year 6 English and mathematics sets. In other years it is satisfactory as there are inconsistencies in the way targets for achievement are shared with the pupils and checked to ensure they are met. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make sound progress at a steady rate. There are times when the more able pupils are not challenged enough and complete work at a similar level to the other pupils. There is a satisfactory and improving curriculum that is well focused on basic skills of English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). Older pupils' achievement in ICT is very good and high quality presentations are developed in a number of subjects. The pupils are polite, well behaved and thoughtful children who are a pleasure to talk to. Their personal development is good. They are mature and sensible learners. Year 6 pupils are ready for the move to secondary education and life beyond school because they show much independence and initiative and work extremely well together. Pupils are enthusiastic learners who have an outstanding understanding of what is needed to keep healthy. Care, guidance and support are good, with thorough systems to safeguard all pupils.

School leaders and the governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and accurately evaluate its performance. Governors ask challenging questions to check that pupils are doing as well as they should. The climate of self-improvement and strong teamwork is obvious. Everyone is insistent that the quality of provision and pupils' achievement can be better and they are working successfully to meet this goal. Improvement has been swift over the last year as a result of the good leadership and improving teaching, although there has not yet been time enough for this to be fully reflected in the standards. The school is in a good position to continue to improve and raise standards. 'My daughter looks forward to each day and comes home happy every day' was one parent's summary of the improving provision at the school.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Work to raise standards by ensuring that there is always enough challenge in the work set for the more able pupils.
- Make teaching and learning better by ensuring that pupils know consistently what they must do to reach the next level in their work and when they have achieved it. A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Achievement dipped at the end of last year, and was not good enough. Standards were below average. This was in marked contrast to achievement in previous years, which typically had been better than that found in most junior schools. The fall in achievement and standards was largely owing to the staffing changes that affected the two Year 6 classes earlier in their junior years. Whilst these classes were well taught in Year 6, the pupils did not regain all of the lost ground by the time they left for secondary school.

Staffing is now stable, teaching quality has improved rapidly and achievement is increasing. Pockets of weaker achievement have been identified speedily and effective steps taken to raise all pupils' rates of progress to a satisfactory level. Although girls did not achieve as well as boys last year, effective measures have been put in place to help girls make better progress. Standards and achievement in mathematics and writing were weaker than in reading and science at the end of the last school year. Now they are similar and satisfactory across these subjects because of the effective strategies to raise achievement. The more able pupils are the current focus for improved achievement because their work is not always sufficiently demanding. Nonetheless, the setting arrangements in Year 6 are particularly effective in meeting their needs and achievement is good in that year. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are benefiting from much improved systems to ensure their work is based on the necessary small steps and they are progressing at the expected rate. The school has set very challenging targets for the current Year 6 and they are well on track to achieve them.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of the pupils are good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Social and moral development is good, spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are excited by the opportunities they are offered, particularly in the many ways they are allowed to take on responsible roles and influence the running of the school. Attendance rates are satisfactory. Pupils are able to take action to protect the environment through the eco-committee and are proud of their achievements such as recycling and winning an 'environmental school' award. They have an outstanding awareness of how to stay healthy, through running the tuck shop, encouraging the drinking of water and taking part in physical activities. They take these practices home and actively educate their parents in being environmentally aware and staying healthy. This has resulted in the school gaining the platinum award for healthy schools. They also value the opportunity of sharing in the planning of their own learning by making suggestions for improving the way they are taught, for example by having more opportunities for active learning and for linking topics across several subjects.

Pupils feel safe and say that there is always someone to help should a problem arise. Incidents of bullying are minimal and are dealt with swiftly. Behaviour is good both in lessons and around the school and pupils are polite and courteous. Pupils develop a good awareness of their school and local communities. Older pupils support the younger ones with care and kindness.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

The new senior leaders have made effective improvements to teaching, which is satisfactory overall and continuing to improve. There have been a number of important changes to staffing and systems to check and evaluate teaching quality have been sharpened. The school has worked well with the local authority in developing an intensive programme for improvement in provision for English and mathematics. Pupils' achievement is getting better as a result. The pupils enjoy their learning and work hard. All staff are keen to improve their own teaching and alert to the remaining inconsistencies in their practice, especially in ensuring sufficient challenge in the work they set for more able pupils.

Teaching assistants work well with their pupils. Much of their focus is with vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, who gain from the effective support they are given. Relationships between staff and pupils are very strong, which shows in the way pupils strive to do well. There is good celebration of pupils' achievement in lessons and this assists their good personal development.

School leaders are not complacent and know that teaching can be improved even more. Strengths such as the brisk pace, effective use of computer controlled equipment and the firm and fair management of behaviour are widespread. The sharing and checking of targets with pupils are less so.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy an appropriate curriculum that meets all statutory requirements. The ICT curriculum is a particular strength and pupils frequently use lap-tops in lessons, at lunchtime and after school. Interactive whiteboards in every classroom enable lessons to be exciting, for example when playing 'Countdown' to develop numeracy skills. The school intends to improve the curriculum to make learning more active and, at the request of pupils, to introduce more cross-curricular topics.

Pupils are set according to ability for literacy and numeracy. The system is particularly effective in Year 6, although the setting of pupils in other year groups does not always enable the most able to reach their potential.

The school has become the first anywhere to win the new national award for its outstanding range of lunchtime clubs and after school events. These involve expert musicians and sportspersons working with the pupils, resulting in high quality performance.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

The school is rightly proud of its caring ethos. Support begins for pupils before they enter the school as efficient processes are in place to ease the transition from the infant schools. The breakfast club ensures that all pupils are able to make a good start to the day. Arrangements for child protection and checking staff for suitability for working with children are rigorous. Good procedures are in place to support vulnerable children.

The system to track pupils' progress is good and older pupils are identified for further support in the form of booster classes in order to ensure progress is maintained at a consistent pace. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities has improved well over the last year and successfully enables these pupils to learn steadily. Although there are inconsistencies in the sharing of targets with pupils, teaching assistants and the learning mentor are used effectively to support pupils' individual achievement.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school which is shared with his staff. He knows his school well through effective monitoring and is quick to recognise qualities in his staff that can be tapped into to improve the school's performance. There is a strong ethos of teamwork so that all staff report that they are listened to, valued and have a contribution to make. Senior leaders support each other well and have a strong input to the smooth running of the school, ensuring that good practice is shared and that there is a drive for consistency of approach and raised standards.

The governing body also knows the school well and is actively involved in planning for the future development of the school. It is well informed and is quick to challenge school leaders in order that pupils are always placed first in decision making.

There are effective procedures to monitor, evaluate and improve the work of the school in order to meet its challenging targets. School leaders and the governors recognise that target-setting, pupil self-review and the provision for the more able are areas for improvement in teaching and learning and key priorities in their drive to raise standards.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

|   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | <b>School Overall</b> |
|---|-----------------------|

### Overall effectiveness

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b> | 3   |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?  | 2   |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 2   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements  | 2   |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection   | Yes |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>How well do learners achieve?</b>   | 3 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress                              | 3 |

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>          | 3 |
| <b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b> | 3 |
| <b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>   | 2 |

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 2   |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2   |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets   | 2   |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can                     | 3   |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money  | 2   |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 2   |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?  | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures?   | No  |
| Does this school require a notice to improve?  | No  |

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

11 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bleakhouse Junior School, Oldbury, B68 9DS

Thank you for giving us such a warm welcome when we visited your school earlier this week. We were impressed with your politeness and thoughtfulness. We enjoyed talking with you and sharing ideas about your school. We think it is providing you with an appropriate education that is improving quickly.

We have written in our report about the strengths of your school.

- You are keen to come to school, work well and you make satisfactory progress.
- You have many friends, help each other and are proud of your work.
- You are well behaved.
- You are taught soundly and enjoy learning about all the necessary subjects.
- You are looked after properly.
- Your school is well led and your headteacher expects you to do your best. We have listed two improvements for your teachers to work on.
- To make sure that you have hard enough work all of the time.
- To give you more time to check whether you are reaching your targets.

We are sure that you will want to help your teachers make these improvements. You can do this by continuing to talk to them about your work and how well you think you are doing.

Good luck with your studies.

Yours faithfully

David Carrington Lead inspector