

Blackrod Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105191
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	287148
Inspection date	14 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Suzi Clipson-Boyles 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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Christine Bailey
Headteacher	Mr Ian Dryburgh
Date of previous school inspection	9 December 2002
School address	Manchester Road Blackrod Bolton Lancashire BL6 5SY
Telephone number	01204 333488
Fax number	01204 333490

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	14 June 2007
Inspection number	287148

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school situated in a suburban village between Bolton and Chorley. It is currently oversubscribed as a result of its popularity with parents. Nearly all the children are of White British heritage. They live locally in a mix of private and local authority housing. The number of children eligible for free school meals is extremely low. The percentage of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements, is well below the national average. The school provides before- and after-school childcare which is subject to separate registration and inspection by Ofsted.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with outstanding features. Children love attending as shown by their extremely low absence record. They feel well cared for and respond enthusiastically to the way their teachers make learning fun. Every child really does matter in this school because the headteacher is highly committed to their well-being and learning. He successfully leads a strong team of hard-working staff to provide a safe, stimulating and fun environment in which children learn successfully. This is achieved by rigorous self-evaluation that leads to continuous improvement. Governors are extremely committed and support the school well, although their ability to use assessment data to hold the school to account is only in the early stages of development. The vast majority of parents are very positive about the school and give good support. The school council ensures that children's views and ideas make a difference, for instance they are currently helping to plan a new adventure playground.

Children make good progress overall during their time here. They achieve particularly well in their first three years. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. From starting points that are around national expectations, the Reception children achieve well. By the end of the year many have reached levels above those expected for their age. In Years 1 and 2 they continue to make very good progress. During Key Stage 2 progress is more variable from class to class, but by the end of Year 6 standards remain above the national average. Test results in science are excellent. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress. More able children achieve in line with the national picture for English and mathematics, but are significantly ahead in science.

Children's attitudes to learning are excellent. This is because teachers work hard to plan good lessons that are enjoyable. Resources such as interactive whiteboards are well-used to capture the children's interests. Staff provide different tasks for different ability groups and this approach particularly helps children who find learning difficult. Learning support assistants also work well to support those children. However, specific activities for more able children are not always designed in ways that lead to more advanced learning. This means that not enough children are reaching higher levels in mathematics and English. Work is regularly marked by teachers, although the marking does not always direct children to how they can improve their next piece of work. Not all teachers build on opportunities to involve children in discussing their own work in ways that will help them understand how to improve.

Children have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. This is due to the excellent curriculum that the school provides. Subject teaching is enriched by visits and visitors. Teachers link areas of learning together in ways that are meaningful to the children. The school works closely with other partners to further extend the benefits for children. For example the police teach about road safety, and there are close links with a school in South Africa. Children are extremely keen to work in the community and they do this well, at the same time learning important social skills that help to prepare them for their working lives. Likewise, they take an active part in contributing to school life. All Year 6 pupils have special responsibilities such as setting up resources in other classes and operating audio equipment for assembly. They carry out these duties with efficiency and pride.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and helps children to achieve well. They are well cared for and their health and safety are of paramount importance. Children join Reception

from a number of pre-school settings. Their levels of learning vary enormously, but overall they are around the national expectations for their age. By the end of the year they have made such good progress that overall standards are just above national expectations for their age. A significant number of children display challenging behaviour when they start, but the school quickly helps them to settle down. Staff have high expectations, and patiently teach the required social skills. As a result children gain more positive attitudes and become very engaged in their learning. They take responsibility for choosing activities and enjoy doing special jobs such as giving out the milk and tidying up. They are helped by the school to adopt safe and healthy practices. For example the nurse's magic gel that showed up where they had not washed their hands properly has ensured that they now do this thoroughly! Learning activities are carefully planned around a theme. The immediate environment is often used to enrich the learning; for example, a visit to the village Post Office has helped the children learn how to serve in their own classroom Post Office.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all more able children throughout the school achieve their full potential in English and mathematics.
- Ensure that lesson planning focuses on what different groups need to learn as well as what they need to do.
- Adapt current approaches to marking to help children understand the step-by-step improvements required from one piece of work to the next.
- Further develop governors' confidence in using assessment evidence to challenge and check the work of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children make good progress overall moving from levels that are around the national expectations at the start of Reception to above national averages by the end of Year 6. Achievement is good in most subject areas and in science it is excellent. In Key Stage 1, building on the strong start made in Reception, children continue to make very good progress and they reach above national average levels in their statutory assessments at the end of Year 2. During the four years in Key Stage 2, the rates of progress vary from subject to subject and class to class. This can be seen in the school's own assessment data and in the children's work. However, by the end of Year 6 national test results remain above those nationally. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do exceptionally well. Science test results are well above the national averages for all groups of learners. The school has high expectations and sets very challenging targets for more able children. However, in English and mathematics, overall results for the higher levels of attainment remain in line with the national average figures.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school has modestly described this area of its work as good, but the inspection found it to be outstanding. Likewise, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exemplary. From Reception through to Year 6, children demonstrate that they know how to behave well and why this is important. They are kind and considerate to one another, and work cooperatively in class. Even though it was a very wet and windy day during the inspection, meaning that the children could not go out to play, they were patient and extremely well

behaved. They are enthusiastic about learning, and pay very close attention during lessons. They are keen to answer questions, and are able to discuss issues sensibly and sensitively. They are conscious of health and safety issues. Staff felt confident enough in their safe behaviour to take 47 Year 5 and 6 children to France on a residential educational visit. The way that children take on special jobs is impressive. They go about this with maturity and pride. For example, older children act as play partners to the younger ones at break times. Out in the community, Year 4 children collected old mobile phones for recycling and Year 6 children organised a highly successful party for local senior citizens which was enjoyed by all.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Effective teaching takes place throughout the school. As a result, children make good progress and enjoy their learning. Teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge and put careful thought into how they can make lessons interesting. Learning support assistants work alongside teachers to provide good quality support, particularly for children who find learning more difficult. Planning takes account of different groups of learners and this is particularly successful in helping children who are at lower starting points. However, some of the more able children are not making fast enough progress because although some activities require them to do something different they are not necessarily helping them to learn something different, for example at a higher level of understanding or skill. Teachers conscientiously mark children's work. Comments are encouraging and supportive, but do not usually provide action points for improving the next piece of work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The inspector judged this area of work to be outstanding, which is higher than the school assessed it to be. The curriculum makes a significant contribution to children's positive attitudes to learning and their keenness to come to school. It provides a good balance between the subject areas. These are often linked together in themes to provide additional opportunities for developing the children's interest. For example, Year 2 children were thrilled to be following up their work on animals whilst also learning about how non-fiction books provide explanations such as the fascinating habits of penguins! Teachers use the expertise of visitors to extend the children's learning. Likewise, visits outside the classroom provide memorable learning experiences, such as history at Smithills Hall. The curriculum also prepares children well for their future lives. Three languages are taught in school and business skills are developed and enjoyed through activities such as the garden centre play area in Year 1 and making and selling biscuits in Year 5. After-school clubs are well attended and children appreciate the opportunities to stay healthy through additional sports clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good quality care, guidance and support for its children. There are high levels of commitment by staff and efficient management of the school's policies. These ensure that children's welfare is promoted. Systems for ensuring the health and safety of the children are in place, including the government's requirements for safeguarding. Children's personal

development and well-being are exemplary because of the care taken to teach social skills and promote good behaviour. Children's understanding on cultural and moral issues is helped by the opportunities provided by the school, such as the enjoyable visits to and from a multicultural school in Bolton. Teachers make time for children to talk about their feelings and express their views. Guidance and support with academic work is good, but children are not yet sufficiently involved in reviewing and assessing their own work in order to understand where they need to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The creative and visionary leadership of the headteacher ensures that all staff work towards ensuring quality provision for the children. He is well supported by the deputy and assistant headteachers who each play an important role in school improvement. All staff are passionate about the school and everyone plays an important part in its ongoing success. The school regularly evaluates how it is doing so that it can continue to plan appropriate improvements each year. The capacity for further improvement is good although there is a tendency to try to do too much each year! As a result of the strategic leadership and efficient day-to-day management, most groups of learners make good progress. Links with outside agencies are particularly strong. The school has been recognised in many ways for its success, for example staff are consulted by other schools and the local authority to give advice and guidance. Governors are hard-working and supportive of the school. Their recent self-evaluation has led to relevant training and they accurately recognise that the next stage in their development needs to be a more rigorous approach to holding the school to account. Pupils and parents contribute to school improvement through questionnaires and the very open way in which they are welcomed to comment on specific issues.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	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

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	2
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	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you very much indeed to you and all the staff for giving me such a warm welcome when I came to inspect your school. It was such a joy to spend the day with you all because there was a very caring but hard-working atmosphere. I would like to say a special thank you to the Year 6 cooks for the delicious cheese cake. I enjoyed it very much at the end of the inspection!

Mr Dryburgh and the teachers think your school is good and I agree! In fact, some of the things at your school are outstanding. Here are some of the things that I think make your school special. The teachers work very hard to help you learn. As well as interesting classroom activities there are visits (like to the village Post Office) and visitors (like the road safety officers). These extra activities help to make the learning even more interesting for you. You make good progress during your time at Blackrod Primary School and you are especially good at science. I was very impressed with your behaviour. I noticed the way you listen well and are keen to answer questions in lessons. You are very good at making decisions and taking responsibility for things. I think this will help you when you are doing your work as grown-ups. You know how to stay safe and why it is important to make healthy choices. You also do lots of sport!

There are some things that I am asking the staff to do that I believe will help the school become even better. Some of you are capable of learning harder work in English and mathematics and this will help you get even higher results. I would also like the teachers to involve you more in looking at each piece of work to see small steps to improving each week. This may involve a different sort of marking. I am hoping that the governors will also be able to learn even more about what you can do in school, so they can check with Mr Dryburgh whether you are reaching the very best levels you can.

I do wish you all a very happy and successful future and hope that Blackrod Primary School continues to be a good school in which you can learn and have fun.