



# Black Firs Primary School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 111045  
**Local Authority** Cheshire  
**Inspection number** 288840  
**Inspection dates** 2–3 October 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Ian Thompson

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>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Longdown Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Congleton
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		Cheshire CW12 4QJ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01260 272935
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	238	<b>Fax number</b>	01260 277285
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr D Whitewright
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Martin Casserley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 June 2001		

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<b>Age group</b> 4–11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 2–3 October 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 288840
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This average size school serves an area of broadly average social and economic circumstances. Eligibility for free school meals is much lower than usual. The great majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds; a few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. A small minority of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need.

## 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 some outstanding features that provides good value for money. The best thing that it does is to give pupils confidence in themselves so that they develop the independent learning skills necessary to take advantage of educational opportunities through life.

Pupils at all levels of capability, including those at an early stage of learning English, achieve well as they move through the school. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage and are well prepared for their life in the school. They get on well with each other and with adults and are eager to learn. Pupils' standards are broadly average when they enter Year 1. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average showing that pupils have achieved well. In 2006, results in national tests at the end of Year 1 were broadly average. At the end of Year 6, results were above average and showed an improvement on the previous year.

Pupils' personal development is good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This is the result of the creative and expressive opportunities that teachers provide throughout the school together with their emphasis on teamwork, cooperation and kindness. Pupils understand some aspects of healthy living such as taking regular exercise but they do not consistently practise healthy eating or make sensible choices about their diet.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers plan lessons together and teach in teams. Pupils benefit from the shared expertise of this approach and teachers benefit from the support of colleagues in classrooms. This method of working gives teachers the opportunity to match work in groups closely to pupils' needs so that they are challenged appropriately. However, because tracking of progress is not consistent, occasionally the opportunity to adapt work is missed. Above all, pupils clearly enjoy lessons because of the interesting ways in which they are taught.

The school's curriculum is outstanding in the way that it provides a wide variety of opportunities for learning and pupils' personal development both in and out of lessons. Subjects are organised and taught in ways that help pupils make effective links between the different areas of the curriculum and make sense of what they have learned.

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good. The procedures for safeguarding pupils are effective, including the arrangements for child protection. The school works well with outside agencies to ensure care for its pupils. The caring atmosphere in the school results in excellent relationships at all levels. Whilst the school tracks pupils' progress, the process is not rigorous or accurate enough to enable teachers to know precisely how well the pupils are doing or ought to be doing. This is a key element in the difference between the school's and inspectors' judgement of this aspect of its work.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's vision for the school as a place that provides its pupils with lifelong learning skills is supported and implemented by managers at all levels. The result is an exciting, visually stimulating school in which pupils enjoy learning and consequently make good progress. In addition, because the

headteacher and senior staff have created a common sense of purpose amongst teachers, the school's wider aims are consistently promoted in lessons. Senior staff lead by example - some of the best teaching during the inspection was seen in their lessons. The principles of best value are applied to all aspects of the school's work through continuous monitoring of the quality of its performance. Governors support the school well and play a full part in long-term planning for improvement. The school's evaluation of its work is largely matched by inspection judgements with the exception of the quality of guidance and support. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection and the school is well placed for further improvement.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the tracking of pupils' performance so that teachers know clearly how well pupils are doing and how well they ought to be doing.
- Improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of healthy lifestyles.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils do well in the Foundation Stage, particularly in social learning, but a substantial minority have difficulties with literacy and numeracy that persist through Years 1 and 2. By the end of Year 2 standards in English, mathematics and science are close to average, indicating satisfactory achievement. In other respects, pupils make good progress and successfully acquire the learning and social skills that stand them in good stead for their education in Years 3 to 6. The pace of progress picks up when pupils enter Year 3 and, by the end of Year 6, standards are above average. Results in national tests at the end of Year 6 have been consistently above average and have shown an improving trend over the last five years.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils develop a strong sense of right and wrong as a result of the school's deeply embedded teaching about rights, responsibilities and respect. Their response matches the outstanding opportunities they have for reflection and the expression of thoughts and feelings. For example, Year 6 pupils showed great sympathy for the plight of a Second World War evacuee in an outstanding English lesson taught through role-play. Pupils are well mannered and well behaved, developing into confident and independent young people. Their learning about religions and cultures ensures that they are well prepared for life in a multicultural society.

Pupils understand some aspects of healthy living but do not know enough about other aspects such as the dangers of smoking.

Pupils feel safe in school; they agree that bullying is not an issue. The responsible attitudes shown by the great majority of pupils are developed by the many opportunities that the school provides. The school council is a good example of the way that the

school gives pupils the opportunity to take part in decision making; they are given the responsibility to manage a generous budget. Pupils' enjoyment of their learning is reflected in their above average attendance.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching engages pupils' interest so that they are eager to learn. In the majority of lessons, teachers make pupils think and are good at encouraging them to develop effective work habits. The excellent relationships they have with teachers and with each other contribute much to the quality of cooperative learning. Teachers give pupils the confidence to take risks and to learn from their mistakes. Good teaching and the very creative aspects of the curriculum enable pupils to reach high standards in the creative and expressive arts.

Teachers support pupils well through marking but longer-term assessments do not always provide a clear enough picture of how well pupils are doing or how well they ought to be doing.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The innovative curriculum caters outstandingly well for the needs of all pupils. Basic skills are well provided for through an appropriate emphasis on literacy, numeracy, science and information and communication technology. Other subjects are taught alongside as topics or themes and are linked in meaningful ways that help pupils make sense of their learning. The Foundation Stage curriculum offers exciting provision to encourage independent learning and this theme is continued throughout the school. The development of self-reliance is a key feature of the curriculum. Pupils say that they enjoy the opportunities for independent learning that the teachers provide. Parents say that they appreciate the way the school has designed the curriculum and one parent commented that, 'The school provides a fantastic experience because children are at the heart of the school's work'. The curriculum is enhanced by an extensive range of enrichment activities such as visits and extra-curricular activities. They extend learning and contribute a great deal to pupils' personal development.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

A culture of support has been established within the school and this ensures that pupils feel safe and confident that there is always someone they can talk to. The learning mentor supports the most vulnerable pupils very well.

Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe, and there is strong emphasis on developing positive attitudes, which supports pupils' learning and progress.

The school has good procedures for involving parents in their children's education. This is of particular value for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The collegiate approach to management that has been established in the school means that staff are fully informed and know what is expected of them. The result is an approach based on shared values so that, for example, the school is calm and purposeful because lessons are planned to involve pupils in learning and so little time is lost in managing behaviour. In addition, because the headteacher and senior staff have created a common sense of purpose among teachers, the school's wider aims are also consistently promoted in lessons. Changes are made to tackle weaknesses identified through monitoring, for example, in teaching styles, and are closely checked for their impact. As part of this process, governors are constantly in touch with the school. This enables them to be well informed and able to support the school well while holding it appropriately to account for its performance.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### 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>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	2

### 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	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	2

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1
<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.

## 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	1
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**

As you know, two inspectors visited your school to find out if it is giving you the education you should receive. Thank you very much for making us so welcome. We really enjoyed talking to you and finding out about what you enjoy. We were very impressed by the courtesy and help you gave us. We agree with you that yours is a good school. It is a safe and happy place where everyone can enjoy learning.

Some of the really good things about your school are:

- the confidence you have in yourselves
- your good behaviour and attitudes to learning
- the way your teachers make lessons enjoyable for you
- how well you get on together and the care you show for others
- the way your artwork brightens up the school and shows how well you are learning.

We have asked your teachers to improve some things to make your school a better place to learn. These are:

- to make sure that your teachers know how well you are doing and if you should be doing better
- to make sure that you learn all the things you need to know about how to live healthy lives.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection of your school. We hope you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers to make Black Firs an even better place to learn.