

Blackawton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113186
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	289540
Inspection date	15 May 2007
Reporting inspector	John Carnaghan

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	139
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Hadow
Headteacher	Dave Strudwick
Date of previous school inspection	29 May 2002
School address	Blackawton Totnes TQ9 7BE
Telephone number	01803 712363
Fax number	01803 712645

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Blackawton Primary School is a small school serving a rural area of south Devon. The school has below average numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities but it has above average numbers of pupils with statements of special need. The school has a below average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and the first language of all pupils is English. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2005 after a period when the school did not have a permanent headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Blackawton Primary School provides a satisfactory education and is well placed to build on recent improvements to move forward in the future. After a difficult period when there was no permanent headteacher and the school lacked direction, the good leadership provided by the current headteacher has stabilised the school and is starting to bring about improvements, particularly in achievement. The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory.

Pupils' standards are about average. Although boys do not progress as well as girls in some areas, achievement across the school is satisfactory. This is largely because teaching is sound, although sometimes teachers talk for too long and pupils switch off. Pupils' reluctance to listen also hampers learning. The assessment of progress has only recently improved and does not yet give consistent guidance to pupils about their standards of work and what they should do to improve. Pupils enjoy school and their personal development is satisfactory. Pupils and staff report that behaviour has improved and it also is now satisfactory. Pupils' good knowledge about healthy diets is encouraged by the delicious, nutritious school meals. Pupils correctly report that they are well looked after but they do not all receive effective academic guidance. The curriculum is good. Pupils appreciate what is on offer and the opportunities to develop interesting work, one Year 6 pupil reporting, 'The topic books are really artistic and are unique to you.' Constructive links with other schools help broaden what the school offers and schemes of work are interesting and offer good opportunities for pupils to display their creativity.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Encouraged by the headteacher, staff are developing their leadership and management roles and feel shared ownership in improving the school. The role of subject leaders had been neglected but now has higher status and is developing. The school has sound and improving self-evaluation methods and this ensures more thorough and effective planning for the future. Governance is satisfactory and governors are supportive of the headteacher's initiatives.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement, particularly those of boys, through more skilful teaching and improved use of assessment information.
- Ensure that pupils are aware of their standards of work and what they should do to improve them. A small proportion of schools where 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

Pupils start their school lives with skills that are similar to those seen nationally. Their skills at the beginning and end of the Foundation Stage are at expected levels and their standards at the end of Year 6 are close to the national average. Pupils' achievement across the school is satisfactory. This is a decline since the previous inspection although, as the current headteacher has established himself and instituted new policies and procedures, achievement has started to improve. Although the achievement of current pupils in Year 6 remains satisfactory, there are clear indications that all pupils are starting to benefit from improvements in provision and are making better progress than they have in the recent past.

Boys have underachieved in comparison with girls for a number of years. As the school has developed more sophisticated assessment methods, it has begun to recognise the underlying reasons for this and has put a number of measures in place which successfully help and motivate boys. This has yet to feed through into better test results. The school has set challenging targets for 2007 and there is good evidence to show that these are likely to be met. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are given good support and achieve as well as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy coming to school because 'learning is fun'. Their enjoyment is evident in the good relationships between pupils of all ages and with adults. Although attendance is satisfactory, the level of authorised absence is higher than expected.

Behaviour and attitudes are satisfactory. Pupils generally work and play together happily and safely. Whilst they are accomplished speakers, pupils' listening skills are less well developed and sometimes teachers have to manage their loquaciousness firmly. The school has recently won a national award for providing healthy and appetising school meals. Pupils enjoy their lunches and know the importance of healthy eating.

Pupils have a few opportunities to take on responsibilities within their classes and some older ones take on whole school responsibilities, such as helping out in the office at lunchtime. There is a school council but it has a limited influence on the life of the school and there is too little feedback from the councillors to their classes. Pupils are developing satisfactory literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills that make a contribution to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory and so pupils' learning is sound. Teachers and other adults work hard to ensure that pupils with a wide range of needs are positively included in lessons and that their learning needs are met. In good lessons, teachers are confident and usually engage pupils well and lessons are often well prepared. The youngest pupils are happy in the Foundation Stage, where teaching is satisfactory. It is well planned and pupils' progress carefully recorded.

Teachers are beginning to plan lessons that build on previous learning and exploit technology well. Most boys and girls respond positively to this and are keen to improve their knowledge and understanding. However, teaching methods do not always fully engage pupils who are not good at sitting and listening for extended periods and the learning focus of the lesson is not always clearly shared with the pupils.

In the last 18 months, the school has developed systems to ensure that pupils' work is regularly assessed. The information gained is starting to inform the school's priorities for the future. A new system of analysing pupils' work, tracking progress and setting group targets has been established. However, the teachers do not yet incorporate this information in their lesson plans.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well adapted to pupils' needs and tastes and they speak enthusiastically about it. They particularly like topic work. One Year 6 pupil said, 'You get to do your own thing. It's all the subjects you like in one book.' Topics are well planned and allow pupils flexibility in how they study. The work they produce is often interesting and beautifully presented. ICT is used in many different ways to enliven learning; for example, teachers use interactive whiteboards with growing confidence to provide additional stimulation in lessons. Pupils do not always have enough opportunities to work collaboratively and the school is planning to offer more opportunities for pupils to work together. Personal, social and health education is well organised and taught, and greatly benefits pupils' self-confidence.

A consortium with other local schools enables a wider range of learning opportunities to be provided. After-school activities offer pupils a broad variety of artistic, sporting and other opportunities and are well attended. Plentiful visits and many visitors to the school further enhance pupils' learning opportunities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy school and feel secure there. The school's procedures for safeguarding pupils meet all requirements and are thorough and effective. Rules are clearly displayed in each classroom and systems are in place to monitor and reward good behaviour. The school liaises effectively with other professionals to provide support for vulnerable pupils and ensure they are fully included in school life. Teachers and other adults are beginning to share with pupils how they can improve their work in twice-yearly review meetings. However, these meetings are not sufficiently frequent and do not allow enough time for pupils to review their own progress thoroughly or to reflect in any depth on how they feel they can improve their work. Individual education plans for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities support their learning effectively because the targets are clear and the pupils are fully involved in the review process.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Sound leadership and management have enabled the school to improve its provision so that pupils now achieve satisfactorily. Under the skilful leadership of the headteacher, the process of renewing and improving the school has begun. There is now satisfactory monitoring of what the school provides and outcomes for the pupils. The impact of these reforms on pupils' achievement is just starting to be seen.

Leaders at the school have begun to use self-evaluation to provide an accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses. This process is starting to inform the school improvement plan. For example, there is now a clearer emphasis on encouraging boys' learning. More staff are involved in leading aspects of the school than in the past and this is promoting improvements, for example in the curriculum. There is evidence that improvements are likely to lead to better outcomes for pupils. Due to past difficulties with the leadership of the school, progress since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory. However, the recent changes brought about by the new headteacher show that the school's capacity for future improvement is satisfactory.

Blackawton is an inclusive school. Discrimination is rigorously tackled. Adults work hard to ensure that disadvantaged pupils receive good support to help them achieve. Teaching assistants are deployed to provide assistance where it is most required. Resource needs are quickly identified and effectively addressed. For example, each classroom now has laptop computers and other ICT equipment available. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Governors discharge all their responsibilities and meet all statutory requirements. They support the school well and monitor the school independently, using this information to challenge the school's priorities when appropriate.

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
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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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

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

The quality of provision

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

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
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	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

16 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blackawton Primary School, Blackawton, Totnes TQ9 7BE

Thank you for your helpfulness when we visited your school recently; it was good to meet so many of you. You expressed your views clearly and honestly; this helped the inspectors very much.

We believe that the school is improving and that it provides a satisfactory education. You make satisfactory progress and are growing up well. Teaching is satisfactory and the curriculum is good. Leadership and management are good and the headteacher has made changes for the better since he joined the school in 2005. The school's best features are:

- The fact you like the work you do; the way topics are planned makes study very enjoyable for you.
- The school's very good links with other schools which provide you with a bigger range of areas to study.
- The hard work done by the school to ensure that you all receive the same opportunities to learn.

All schools have room for improvement. In the case of your school, the most important things that the school should work on are:

- Making sure your lessons are exciting so that you learn even faster.
- Making sure that you know exactly how well you are doing and the next steps you need to take in each subject.

Once again, many thanks for your help during the inspection. Perhaps you could help in school by trying to always listen carefully to your teachers.

With all good wishes

John Carnaghan

Lead inspector