

Blaby Stokes Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120116
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	291634
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Lois Furness

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	318
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Peberdey
Headteacher	Chris Meadows
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2002
School address	Queen's Road Blaby Leicester LE8 4EG
Telephone number	0116 2772082
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

This larger than average school serves an area of below average socio-economic deprivation. The majority of pupils are White British and although eight minority ethnic backgrounds are represented, all pupils are fluent English speakers. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. Most children enter the Foundation Stage (Reception) with skills that match those expected for their age. A new headteacher was appointed to the school in September 2005 following a time of unsettled leadership. The school has attained the Eco School Award (2004), New Active Mark (2006) and Healthy School Status (2007).

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Blaby Stokes provides a satisfactory quality of education with some good features. Parents are supportive of the school's work saying, 'It is an incredibly warm and welcoming place where children are given space to grow and develop into healthy young people.' This view is endorsed by a number of national awards for physical activity as well as health promotion. These acknowledge pupils' good understanding of leading a healthy lifestyle and keeping themselves safe. Pupils effectively contribute to the community through their work on the school council and the Eco Club, for example. The club is well attended and carries out very good work in looking after the school grounds. Pupils proudly say they grow and cook their own vegetables 'which taste delicious!' A key contributory factor to pupils' enjoyment of school and their good behaviour is the excellent range of clubs and other activities that are offered to them. Enrichment of the satisfactory curriculum is outstanding and as result, pupils' personal development and well-being are good.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. However, they are better in some parts of the school than in others and vary in quality, notably in Years 3 to 6. This is because activities do not consistently match the needs of all pupils. The pace in some lessons is too slow and does not provide enough challenge, particularly for the more able and boys. This means pupils lose concentration and progress is not as good as it could be. Even so, by Year 6, standards are broadly average in English, mathematics and science, and achievement is satisfactory. Children in the Foundation Stage (Reception) make satisfactory progress and reach average standards because of the sound provision made for them. Although the indoor curriculum is satisfactory, opportunities for outdoor learning are not maximised. Teachers do not clearly identify the expected learning for children when they are working outdoors.

The headteacher has an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses and leadership and management are satisfactory. However, although weaknesses are known, the rate of improvement has been slow as, in the past, some staff were resistant to change. However, this is no longer the case and now all are working together towards school improvement. Governance is good. Governors are supportive and ask the right questions about why provision is as it is. Satisfactory monitoring procedures are in place but, as yet, the actions taken as a result of these procedures are not sufficiently focused on eradicating weaknesses. Staff are not held accountable for the standards their pupils attain. Although pastoral guidance is good and pupils feel safe knowing adults will always listen to them, academic guidance is satisfactory. A new computerised system to track pupils' progress over time has recently been introduced. However, information is not always accurate, and as yet the leadership is not able to efficiently evaluate if progress is sufficient. Care, guidance and support therefore are satisfactory.

Whilst some issues from the previous inspection have been successfully tackled, for example better links with parents, others remain, and so the capacity for improvement is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Eliminate inconsistencies in teaching through planning activities that better match the needs of all pupils, particularly the more able and boys.
- Improve outdoor learning opportunities for children in the Reception classes.
- Embed a rigorous tracking and target-setting system so pupils' progress can be checked efficiently and accurately.

- Sharpen the actions to eliminate weaknesses in teaching and make staff more accountable for the standards their pupils attain. 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 is satisfactory although progress is uneven and varies according to the quality of teaching. In Reception, children make satisfactory progress and attain standards that mainly match those expected on entry to Year 1. However, there have been weaknesses in the past in aspects of children's literacy skills particularly in linking sounds and letters and in writing. Although this is improving, the legacy of these weaknesses has influenced writing standards throughout the school. Even though standards are broadly average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, writing has been the weaker element. The leadership has responded well to this concern, good strategies have been implemented and standards are steadily improving.

Although pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress, more able pupils do not consistently make the progress expected of them, as teaching does not always challenge them. Also, boys do not progress as well as girls

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

A good start is made in Reception where children quickly start to develop good attitudes towards school. Pupils behave well in lessons and at playtimes. They are polite and welcoming to visitors. Incidents of poor behaviour are rare and if they do occur they are dealt with quickly and effectively. As a result, pupils feel safe, are enthusiastic about learning and enjoy school. This view is put in a nutshell; as one Year 6 girl said, 'Everything about this school is really good. You have a great time here!' Despite this, attendance is only satisfactory as a small minority of pupils do not attend as regularly as they should.

The Eco Club, which grows vegetables and keeps the school grounds in good order, supports pupils' good understanding of having responsibility for the wider community. Pupils know how to keep safe and have a good appreciation of the need to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. However, pupils' knowledge of the multicultural world in which they live is not well developed. Satisfactory skills in literacy and numeracy and good personal skills prepare pupils soundly for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching varies from good to inadequate. This is reflected in the inconsistent progress of pupils, mainly in Years 3 to 6. A strength in all classes is the very good relationship between adults and pupils. This gives pupils the confidence to share ideas and to ask and answer questions. Teaching assistants are well briefed and are instrumental in ensuring that pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and other vulnerable pupils make satisfactory progress. Interactive whiteboards are used effectively to illustrate key learning points and to engage

pupils' interest. The content of the lesson is clearly identified and shared with pupils so they know what is expected of them. However, not all teachers provide tasks that effectively match the needs of all or focus enough on pupils' learning. Consequently, there is sometimes a lack of challenge and pace is too slow. In the Reception classes, teachers do not clearly identify the specific learning expected for outdoor activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

A strength of the curriculum is the outstanding range of sporting activities and clubs which pupils greatly enjoy, saying they have a 'very sporty school'. Enrichment is excellent and very good use is made of the wider community, where visits, such as those to different places of worship, the library and museums, add interest and relevance to learning. Residential visits for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils effectively support their social development. Opportunities such as 'Our time' enable pupils to gain a good understanding of a healthy lifestyle.

Although there are strengths, the school knows that aspects of the curriculum require improvement. Weaknesses in writing are being rectified through 'Big Writing'. This new way of stimulating all pupils, including boys, to want to write is proving successful. Some boys were overheard saying 'writing is cool!' However, it is recognised that the science curriculum is in need of improvement. Although the indoor curriculum for Reception children is satisfactory, it does not take full advantage of opportunities for promoting learning outdoors.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Parents are especially pleased with the pastoral care provided. They say their children are safe and well looked after in school. This is endorsed by pupils saying, 'If you have problems, teachers look after you.' Good collaboration with a wide range of outside agencies offers pupils many benefits in their personal care and safety. Vulnerable pupils receive good support and say, 'We enjoy working in small groups because you get lots of extra help....and if anyone is feeling tormented, the teachers will always sort things out.' Procedures to improve attendance are satisfactory.

Guidance to help pupils attain higher standards, however, is hindered by weaknesses in procedures for tracking progress.

A new system has been introduced but as yet the information does not provide teachers with an accurate knowledge of pupils' attainment. Also it does not allow the leadership to check quickly if pupils' progress is good enough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Self-evaluation is accurate showing the leadership has a realistic picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Improvement, however, has been slow; this was partly as a result of some staff resistance to change. This has been overcome, a new management team established and all staff are working together as a team to move the school forward. The local authority is providing good support with consultants working alongside subject leaders to provide advice on improving the quality of provision. The governors are well informed, providing both challenge

and support. All statutory policies are in place, including the procedures for ensuring pupils' safety and well-being.

The school is involved in an extensive range of exciting new initiatives. This gives leaders much to implement and evaluate and gives teachers much to learn. Some changes, such as the move to a new way of teaching literacy, are monitored effectively and leadership is strong in this subject. However, although extensive monitoring procedures are in place these are not sharp enough. Actions are not focused enough on eradicating weaknesses in teaching and as yet teachers are not sufficiently accountable for the standards their pupils attain.

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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	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	Yes

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	2
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

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?	3
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	3
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

14 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blaby Stokes C of E Primary School, Blaby, LE8 4EG

You may remember that three inspectors visited your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you and watching some of your lessons. Thank you for being so very polite and helpful during our visit. We think your school is satisfactory. That means there are good points and a few areas that need a bit more work. It was especially good to see so many of you playing happily in the school grounds. You obviously feel very safe and that adults are kind and care for you. We were pleased to see how well you behave. We were also very impressed with all the things you do to keep healthy, especially all the sporting activities. Well done to the cricket team, we believe you are doing really well in your matches. The Eco Club we think does a really good job and I was quite disappointed not to be able to taste the lovely fresh vegetables that you grow. Mr Meadows said the potatoes were really yummy!

By the time you leave in Year 6, most of you reach standards that are similar to those in other schools and you have made satisfactory progress. However, the progress you make varies. So, we have asked your teachers to make sure that you are always given work that is just right for your level of understanding and is not too easy or too hard. We have also asked them to make sure that boys are given the right work. We saw that children in the Reception enjoyed learning and were trying hard to solve simple problems. I know that some of you found the help of 'David Peckham' and 'Posh Peckham' very useful! Now we have asked your teachers to plan the same interesting things for you when you are working outdoors.

We think your headteacher has a good idea about the things that are working well and those that could be better. So we have asked him and other teachers to check carefully on everything that the school does, so they can put right anything that is not working properly.

By the way, you should be really proud of the number of national awards you have helped your school to win, and now we ask you to help your headteacher and teachers to make your school even better.

Yours faithfully

Lois Furness Lead inspector