

Blackshaw Moor CofE (VC) First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124287
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	292946
Inspection date	5 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Patricia Potheary

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3-9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	47
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pamela Hill
Headteacher	Jill Tillmanns
Date of previous school inspection	30 September 2007
School address	Buxton Road Blackshaw Moor Leek ST13 8TW
Telephone number	01538 300337
Fax number	01538 300337

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector

Description of the school

Blackshaw Moor is a small school in a rural setting. Pupils come from a wide mix of social backgrounds. A very small minority have a variety of learning difficulties. The school was without a headteacher between January and September 2003 and from January 2005 until September 2006, due to the long-term sickness and eventual retirement of the previous headteacher and local authority reorganisation plans. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Blackshaw Moor provides a satisfactory level of education for its pupils and there is a delightful community spirit among pupils and staff. The standard of pupils' work is broadly average when they enter Year 1 and when they leave the school. Pupils' achievements and progress in their learning is therefore satisfactory, although their personal development and well-being is good. In the Foundation Stage, children achieve well and make good progress in all areas of learning. Pupils enjoy being at the school very much and their behaviour is excellent. Parents views are very positive indicating typically that 'children prosper at this school'.

Governors have played a significant role in securing the school's effectiveness during the long period without a headteacher and the school is well led and managed. There have been many recent improvements. The new headteacher has done a remarkable job in ensuring that the progress pupils make in several subjects has already increased, especially in mathematics where progress is now good. Although the progress pupils make in writing is satisfactory, pupils' targets are not challenging enough and the gains made each year are not as great as they are in other subjects.

Good monitoring and well-targeted professional development has led to rapidly improving teaching and learning, although these remain satisfactory overall. There are many good elements in lessons, which are usually purposeful and enjoyable. Nevertheless, the link between the challenging level of pupils' targets now being set in some subjects and the way lessons are planned is not strong enough for learning to be consistently good. Despite this, the quality of care, guidance and support is good, pupils' progress is now carefully tracked and good support is given where needed. No child is left to struggle, which means that the less able and pupils with learning difficulties do particularly well.

A good curriculum offers some outstanding additional activities for such a small school, including nine different clubs every week, with very good sporting and performing arts opportunities. Strong links with other schools and organisations further enhance what the school offers. The curriculum enables pupils to make a good contribution to their community, for example through the school council, in organising the playground games and in taking on roles of responsibility such as befriending others. Pupils leave this school as confident well-rounded young people.

What the school should do to improve further

- Set pupils challenging targets in all subjects to increase their rate of progress, especially in writing.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that lesson planning matches work to teachers' assessments of what pupils need to learn to make good progress.

A small proportion of 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 and the progress pupils make is satisfactory and improving due to some well focused recent initiatives. Children make good progress in the Nursery and in Reception, especially in language and communication, where their skills on entry are low. The standard of

pupils' work varies significantly from year to year because numbers are so small, although it is broadly average overall. Pupils' achievement and the progress they make are satisfactory in Years 1 to 3 and good in Year 4. Pupils with learning difficulties and the least able make good progress because they receive timely and skilled support. In mathematics, pupils make good progress, largely due to good target setting and teaching in this subject. Although pupils make generally satisfactory progress in writing, the monitoring and target setting in this subject are the least well developed. Pockets of underachievement in science and information and communication technology (ICT) have been eliminated recently by careful monitoring from improved subject management.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. One group were recently reported to be 'absolutely entranced' bringing in treasures of stones from their gardens when studying rocks and soils, and showing a typically joyful appreciation of the world around them. Although they have a very good experience of art, literature, music and drama, pupils' knowledge of people from other cultures is more limited. Pupils' attendance is now good and has been improved each year. Even among the youngest children, pupils' excellent behaviour is evident as they greet visitors maturely, play harmoniously together, and have a strong regard for the feelings and needs of others. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to be safe, and bullying is very rare. Pupils' good understanding of how to keep healthy means that, in addition to all the good sport they play, they always seem to be on the move in the playground organising interesting games. They also eat healthily and this is well supported by plenty of fruit and vegetables being available at break and with lunch. Pupils conduct themselves as a caring community and are very proud of the sign language they have learned to be able to communicate with any children who depend on it. Pupils' preparation for their future is satisfactory. There are good opportunities provided for pupils to speak confidently and work in teams, and their basic skills are sound, although they have little experience of enterprise or the jobs people do.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Good teaching in the Nursery and Reception is based upon well organised, practical and highly engaging activities to support children's development in all the areas of learning. For Years 1 to 4, there are many strong skills in teaching, including very supportive relationships which support pupils' excellent behaviour, as well as good use of ICT to enhance learning. Although teachers generally provide a good number of interesting activities, in a very small minority of lessons the range of activities are too few and not engaging enough to keep pupils' levels of enjoyment and interest high. Lessons are well planned, based upon good assessment of individual pupils' prior learning, so that skills are built systematically. This means that no-one is left behind and lessons address the full range of pupils' needs. Despite this, the level of work planned in lessons does not always match the challenging targets set for pupils in some subjects and this leads to satisfactory rather than good learning. There are signs that this is improving, and particularly so in mathematics.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well and thoughtfully organised to meet needs and interests of mixed age and ability classes and to build learning systematically. In the Foundation Stage, there is a very good focus on lively outdoor learning. The curriculum is outstandingly rich and there are links with many other organisations to create a vibrant and varied range of visits, visitors and projects to bring learning alive. There are also high quality performing arts, music and art, as well as some excellent sporting opportunities, which have led to the school receiving the Active Mark for sport in 2006 and winning the local small schools' cricket trophy. The curriculum therefore supports very well pupils' growing confidence as well as their understanding of how to be safe and healthy. The curriculum has not done enough to develop pupils' understanding of the working world and of the diversity of different cultures around them, but this is recognised by the school and improvements are planned.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

There are robust procedures to ensure that pupils are safeguarded and well cared for. The provision to support and guide pupils' personal development is thorough, with good, well-targeted support for pupils with learning difficulties and strong links with support agencies. This has resulted in happy, well rounded pupils who typically say that 'the teachers are very nice and all of us are friends'. The guidance to help pupils reach high standards is satisfactory and improving. The tracking of pupils' performance is now good, and it is used well to set challenging targets which pupils understand. Nevertheless, its use is too recent to have had a full impact on the quality of teaching and learning. There is a very good system to keep up the momentum in learning as pupils move from year to year and on to their next school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management have ensured that the school continues to offer a satisfactory and improving education for pupils despite a prolonged period of uncertainty. The new headteacher has shown excellent leadership in putting many systems into place in a very short space of time. These have already led to improvements in pupils' performance in several subjects, especially mathematics, but also, for example, in reading and in literacy in the Foundation Stage. The capacity to improve is therefore good. Good governance has expertly sustained the school over a period of turbulence. School self-evaluation is satisfactory. It is accurate and is leading to good progress being made more frequently by pupils but the systems used for assessing the pupils' progress vary too much in quality from subject to subject.

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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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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?	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	2

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	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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?	2
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	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	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

Dear Children

Blackshaw Moor CofE First School, Blackshaw Moor, Staffordshire ST13 8TW

Thank you for being so welcoming to me when I visited your school. I enjoyed meeting you very much, joining you for lunch and seeing some of your lessons.

Your school is well run and very caring. It is a satisfactory school, with many good things going on, just like you told me. It helps all of you to make at least satisfactory progress in your lessons, and good progress in your social and personal skills. Your headteacher and governors do a good job in seeing that the school keeps improving. I would now like them to help you make more progress, especially in writing by aiming for more challenging targets. Your teachers and teaching assistants are skilled at helping you to meet expected targets; however, I have asked them to make sure that all your lessons are planned to help you reach more challenging goals and so help you progress even faster. Your excellent behaviour is impressive and you make a good contribution to the school and community. I liked the way you have learned sign language to help others, and the way you organise games in the playground is very good.

It is pleasing to see that you take plenty of exercise and eat a healthy diet. Your teachers see to it that you have a good range of subjects and activities to keep you interested and the amount of sport and artistic things that you do is excellent. The school supports and guides you well to keep safe and become well rounded people.

The way you care for one another is very good and you clearly enjoy coming to school. We think that all of this, alongside your good skills in working together, will help prepare you soundly for your next school and future lives. I would like to see you carry on with the good work you all do through the school council to help the school develop further.

Yours sincerely Patricia Potheary

Lead Inspector