



Blackgates Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134406
Local Authority Leeds
Inspection number 294129
Inspection dates 18–19 October 2006
Reporting inspector Ann Sharpe

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Smithy Lane
School category	Community		Tingley, Wakefield
Age range of pupils	3–11		West Yorkshire WF3 1QQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0113 386 2480
Number on roll (school)	327	Fax number	0113 259 7073
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Ms Sherry Bradley
		Headteacher	Ms Elaine Kay-Devanney
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	18–19 October 2006	294129

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Most pupils attending this fairly large school are of White British heritage and live in the nearby council housing estates. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average, as is the proportion entitled to free school meals. There are a few pupils from families who are Travellers. The school opened in September 2004, following the amalgamation of two schools. It operated on two sites until September 2005.

There are well advanced plans for the school to provide a range of services and activities beyond the normal school day in order to meet the needs of the pupils, their families and the wider community, beginning September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Blackgates Primary is a friendly, happy, welcoming and very caring school. In the short time since the amalgamation of Blackgates Infants and Blackgates Juniors, the new school has made its mark in the community, and it is extremely well thought of by parents. The key to this success is the outstanding leadership of the headteacher. She has steered everyone through the challenges by uniting pupils, staff and governors from two different schools and by forging outstanding partnerships with others. Her warmth, inspiration, vision for the future and genuine care for every single pupil give everyone a clear understanding of how they should contribute. This has brought about good teaching and learning, which enables all groups of pupils to achieve well from their starting points, and standards are above average by Year 6.

Another major reason for pupils' good achievement and above average standards is the emphasis in the curriculum and in the whole life of the school placed upon pupils' personal development and well-being. The strong commitment to demonstrating that 'every child matters' is reflected in the way that staff and governors prepare pupils well for their future lives as members of the community. As a result, pupils behave well and put their hearts and souls into enjoying everything they do at school. They have earned their national Investors in Pupils award and are very proud of it. Many pupils attend the extensive programme of extra-curricular activities, especially music and sport. They enjoy regular educational visits, visitors to the school and exciting work in the creative arts. Pupils demonstrate outstanding understanding of healthy lifestyles, for example by eating healthy food and taking regular exercise.

Quality and standards in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception classes) are good. Staff are aware, however, that boys do not reach the same standards as girls by Year 2, and this partly reflects children's varying starting points. Boys in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 sometimes take more encouraging to want to get involved than girls. The school has still to get to grips with tackling this problem and raising their attainment. Boys make up the ground by Year 6, however, and their performance in national tests is as good as that of girls. Pupils throughout the school do better in reading, mathematics and science than they do in writing, and the school has started to make inroads into helping pupils to improve their writing skills. There is further work to do, however, including celebrating pupils' achievements in writing more often, improving the marking of work and giving better examples of handwriting by adults.

Governors and senior staff play a strong part in keeping everything on track. As one governor commented, 'Whatever we do we measure the effects of it.' This sums up the school's dedicated care for all its pupils. The school has a good understanding of how well it is performing, and this view matches that of the inspectors. The school gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing across the school.

- Ensure that boys in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 reach a similar standard of work to that of girls.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When children start in the Nursery class, their attainment is below what is typical for their age, and boys are not as skilled as girls, especially in writing.

By the time they enter Year 1, most meet the national expectations for this age group. Pupils continue to make good progress as they move through the school, and attain above average standards by Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because of good quality support and care they receive. Pupils who are Travellers achieve well because staff understand and value their lifestyles. Pupils' good achievement is reflected well in the 2005 Year 6 national test results, which were above average. The school sets challenging targets for test results and meets or exceeds them. The 2005 Year 2 assessments were below average, and the 2006 results are not expected to show improvement. This is because this year group of pupils includes more boys than girls and a greater number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities than is typical. All pupils, including gifted and talented pupils, achieve well in the creative arts because of the enriching curriculum and strong links with the community.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Good attitudes and behaviour, along with good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are significant pointers of pupils' good future economic well-being. Pupils' outstanding enjoyment is evident in their keen participation in everything that the school has to offer, such as extra-curricular activities, learning to speak French and links with local sports clubs. Pupils are, rightly, very proud of their Investors in Pupils award. Members of the school council take their responsibilities seriously, and 'befrienders' help to make the school a very welcoming and friendly place. Pupils have an outstanding understanding of healthy lifestyles, and have achieved an Active Mark Gold award. They know how to keep safe, for example by waiting until parents arrive to collect them at the end of the day. Parents, rightly, see the school as the 'hub of the community', to which their children make a strong contribution. Although attendance is satisfactory, owing to family holidays in term time and epidemics of sickness, pupils are eager to help their class to win the weekly attendance competitions.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers are dedicated and respected highly by parents. They work closely with well trained support staff to ensure that pupils have the help they need. Discipline is rarely a problem because teachers forge positive relationships with pupils and ensure that pupils know what is expected of them. Teachers prepare lessons carefully, and classrooms and corridors set high standards for the pupils because they are so well organised and presented. Consequently, pupils are keen to learn. Since the amalgamation of two schools, a priority has been to achieve a consistent quality of teaching and learning in all classes. Although some lessons are more effective than others in accelerating learning, the overall picture is positive and pupils achieve well as a result. The school's very clear programme for professional development ensures that teachers are improving their skills all the time. Teachers are now working on improving the teaching of writing, for example, and they know that they need to do more in lessons to help younger boys to catch up with the standards reached by girls at age seven.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils thoroughly enjoy their lessons and other activities. They spend enough time learning the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, and other work, particularly the creative arts, visits and visitors, add considerably to pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Many girls and boys of all abilities play musical instruments, sing in the choir or attend extra-curricular sport. All took part in the harvest assembly, which demonstrated the school's outstanding enrichment of the curriculum, including dance, poetry, music and humour. Staff have reviewed the curriculum carefully to ensure that it is adjusted to cater for the needs of pupils in mixed age classes. In recognition of the importance of good speaking and listening skills in improving pupils' writing, the curriculum includes drama and opportunities for pupils to become more confident to express their ideas orally. The impact of this work is not yet evident in writing results, however, and further work is needed. Similarly, there is more to do to ensure that the curriculum motivates and inspires younger boys sufficiently.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a very caring school with good procedures for protecting and safeguarding pupils. The determined response to pupils' needs by helping them all to do as well as they can is seen in the positive links with others, such as schools, colleges, support agencies and national associations. Good relationships with parents of pupils who are Travellers, along with sensitive support, ensure that these pupils achieve as well as others. Similarly, a high level of care and concern for pupils with learning difficulties

and/or disabilities is much appreciated by parents. One parent commented, 'All children are made to feel very special here.' There are rigorous systems for watching over and improving pupils' attendance, and the learning mentor adds considerably to the quality of pupils' education. Pupils often benefit from good academic guidance, although the marking of their work is inconsistent in quality and helpfulness.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's exceptional leadership has taken the school successfully through a challenging amalgamation of two schools. In a short period, she has united staff and governors and earned the trust and confidence of everyone, including those parents previously opposed to the changes. The headteacher's dedication to the pupils and staff is seen in the 2005 Year 6 national test results, which continued the improving trend of results for pupils who had previously attended Blackgates Junior School. Good support from senior staff and good governance help the school to accurately judge its work, know its strengths and pinpoint the correct priorities for improvement in the future. They know, for example, that standards in writing need to be higher and that boys in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 do not do as well as girls generally. Staff with new responsibilities for overseeing standards in areas of the curriculum that are not subject to national tests are still developing their roles. Nevertheless, the school's strong commitment to attending to the needs of every pupil, along with outstanding partnerships with others, give the school good capacity to improve in the future.

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

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?	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.

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	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

Thank you for talking to inspectors and for answering all our questions so thoughtfully.

We enjoyed visiting your school, especially watching your harvest assembly. Your behaviour was good all the time, and you worked hard in lessons. We are sorry that there was not enough time to see more of all the exciting things that you do, such as playing musical instruments, working with artists, singing in the choir and taking part in sport.

You are right to think that your school is a good school. We can see why you enjoy coming so much, and why your parents are very happy with the new school. You are very enthusiastic and get involved in as much as you can. The adults care about you all, and they work hard to help you to do as well as you can. You have done very well to achieve the Investors in Pupils award, and you are right to feel proud of it. We were surprised how much you could tell us about keeping yourselves healthy, and we found out that the school plans to give you even more time to take healthy exercise.

The main reason that your school is good is that your headteacher understands what the school has to do to help you to learn. She makes sure that everyone works hard together

to give you every chance to be the best that you can be. Teachers and other adults all do their best to help you to overcome any problems and to enjoy school. Another reason why your school is so good is that it links up with lots of other schools, colleges and organisations in the community. This makes sure that your learning is interesting and exciting, and that you are ready to move on to secondary schools when the time comes.

Although you do well in reading, mathematics and science, your writing is not as good. Some younger boys are not as keen to learn new things as the girls are, although the older boys catch up with their learning by Year 6.

- We have asked the school to help you to improve your writing.
- We think that teachers can do more to help younger boys to learn and to catch up with the girls.