

# Blakesley Hall Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103300
<b>Local Authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	308276
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Driscoll

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 category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	609
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Anita Brown
<b>Headteacher</b>	Heather Phillips
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 November 2003
<b>School address</b>	Yardley Green Road Birmingham B33 8TH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01217 832148
<b>Fax number</b>	01217 850479

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This large primary school serves an urban area of Birmingham. A high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school has seen significant changes since it was last inspected. The majority of pupils now come from a number of minority ethnic backgrounds. Most of these pupils are of Pakistani heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is now well above average, many of whom are at a very early stage of learning English when they join the school. Around one in three pupils join the school part way through Year 1, often staying for only a short time before their family leaves the area again. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational need is average.

The school is due to move into completely new buildings in the next few weeks. However, the building work over the past 18 months has severely restricted access to the school and the space available for pupils to play, and these restrictions will continue in the foreseeable future. After a fairly lengthy period of unsettled staffing, a new senior management team have been working together since January 2007.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Blakesley Hall Primary School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Pupils' standards on leaving are exceptionally low, but this represents satisfactory achievement given their very low starting points. Teaching and the curriculum in almost all years are satisfactory. However, in Year 6 the quality of the teaching and curriculum is better, so pupils make good progress. In Year 6, assessments are more frequent so teachers plan lessons that better meet the needs of pupils. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make less progress than others, although their achievement is still satisfactory. This is because they do not get enough opportunities to speak in lessons, including in the Foundation Stage, and the school does not take advantage of all opportunities to improve reading.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory as a result of sound care and support. They enjoy coming to school because teachers make learning fun. Pupils behave well in lessons and pay close attention to their teachers. In the playground though, behaviour is no better than satisfactory. The school's managers have done all they can to minimise the problems caused by the very limited space available for play, but arguments are often caused when pupils bump into one another. Attendance and punctuality are inadequate. The school's managers have not changed all procedures quickly enough to accommodate the increased number of parents who do not speak English. Parents receive letters reminding them of the importance of attendance and punctuality, but the letters are only written in English, so the message is not getting through. The school has also not kept up to date with legislation regarding child protection. All the necessary checks on staff are in place, so pupils are safe, but these are not collated into a single list. The school promotes racial equality well, so pupils have a good understanding of each other's cultures.

The school has made steady progress since it was last inspected, as a result of satisfactory leadership and management. Governors work closely with the headteacher and supported the school when it did not have a stable management team. The new team has the skills necessary to take the school forward. It has gained a very clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching through the comprehensive checks carried out last term. However, all relevant data are not analysed with the same rigour, so actions to improve are not always taken quickly enough.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children enter the Reception class with low skill levels in all areas of learning. Teaching concentrates on improving their personal development, such as sharing and playing together. Progress in these areas, and in their creative development, is good, so children start Year 1 with personal skills that are close to those expected for their age. Achievement overall is no better than satisfactory though, because progress in language and number work is only satisfactory and standards overall remain exceptionally low. Children do not get enough opportunities to talk to adults. This limits their progress in some other aspects, such as their knowledge and understanding of the world. Physical development has been good in the past, but this is slower at present as the building works have taken away the outside area. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in provision, but are not adapting

it quickly enough in response to the increasing numbers of children who speak very little or no English.

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

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to speak in lessons and make better use of time available for reading.
- Ensure letters to parents regarding attendance and punctuality are written in their community language.
- Assess pupils' progress more frequently in Years 1 to 5 so that teachers can plan lessons that more closely meet the needs of pupils.
- Analyse data more rigorously so that actions to improve can be implemented more swiftly in response to changing circumstances and legislation, including that on child protection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Children join the Foundation Stage with skills that are far below those expected for their age. They make good progress in their personal development, but their progress in academic aspects, such as reading and number work, is only satisfactory, so they start Year 1 with exceptionally low standards. Progress in Years 1 to 5 is satisfactory, but good in Year 6. Nevertheless, pupils' standards in English, mathematics and science remain exceptionally low by the time they leave school. Standards on entry to the school are falling, so the standards of the pupils currently in Year 6 are lower and the national tests for Year 6 were also below average in 2007. Boys and girls make similar progress, as do those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, pupils who speak English as an additional language make slightly slower progress than others.

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

### **Grade: 3**

Parents say that the great majority of pupils enjoy school, and this is confirmed by the pupils themselves. This is apparent in pupils' attitudes in lessons, where they concentrate and work hard. Such enjoyment, however, is not reflected in pupils' attendance and punctuality, which are inadequate. Efforts by the school to overcome some negative parental attitudes concerning such issues are not proving effective and attendance is falling. Behaviour is satisfactory overall, and is good in classrooms. The reduction in playground space, however, means that pupils do not have enough space to run around. Mostly, pupils conduct themselves in a safe manner however they do not always show enough regard for other pupils when playing in this restricted play area. School records and pupils themselves report a few incidents of bullying. However, pupils feel that when these are brought to the attention of senior managers appropriate action is taken and the issue is 'sorted, big time'. Such incidents are never race related, because pupils' cultural development is good and they see each other as equals. Pupils know how to lead a healthy life, but do not put this into practice. Far too many eat sweets and crisps at break time for example. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the life of the school and have a sound understanding of their role in the wider community. The progress made by pupils and the levels of independence they attain prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of schooling. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is satisfactory.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teachers plan lessons with fun activities, so pupils look forward to coming to school. Boys in particular like the competitive elements, which encourage them to greater efforts. In Year 6, pupils are assessed every six weeks and teachers use the resulting information to identify exactly what needs to be done to improve the progress made by individuals. In other years, where progress is satisfactory rather than good, assessments are made at the end of each term, so teachers are unable to use up-to-date information about pupils when planning their lessons. Effective bilingual support teachers help newcomers and pupils at the early stages of learning English to settle confidently into school life. However, such pupils' language skills do not develop as quickly as they could because teachers do not use a wide enough range of strategies to encourage pupils to speak in lessons. Pupils often make better progress in small groups than in whole-class situations. In groups, the work is better matched to the pupils' abilities. Teaching assistants usually provide support for all those who need it, rather than confining their support to a single pupil. The whole class sometimes spends too long sitting listening to the teacher, where the work is pitched at the level of the middle ability pupils. This means that it can be too easy for some and too hard for others.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The school devotes a good deal of time to broadening pupils' horizons and promoting racial equality. Visits make studies more relevant, particularly for newly arrived pupils from different cultural backgrounds. The school makes sure that pupils meet lots of visitors who can tell them about life in different countries and there is a consistent message that all people are equal, regardless of race, colour or religion. A good range of extra activities, such as rowing and football, promotes healthy lifestyles well. The main weakness in the school's curriculum is in the provision for reading. Many opportunities to improve reading standards, such as during registration, are missed. The time devoted to quiet reading is not used well enough in many cases. Pupils spend too long choosing or changing books, rather than reading them, and records of the books read are not accurate enough to allow teachers to ensure that texts get progressively harder. Where pupils receive specific help with reading in small groups to allow them to catch up with others, they often make good progress.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 3

Robust child protection procedures are in place and are fully understood by adults in the school. Rigorous checks on adults are carried out, but the school does not keep a single record of these checks and other information. Risk assessments are carried out well, and have been especially effective in ensuring pupils are safe during the building works. The effective work of the learning mentors helps pupils who have behavioural and/or learning difficulties to overcome a range of barriers to learning. The school has implemented a range of strategies to improve attendance and punctuality, but these are not proving effective because they are not understood by all parents. Letters and text messages, for example, are only sent out in English.

Academic guidance is good in Year 6. In other years it is only satisfactory, because the targets given to pupils are too general and do not provide sufficient guidance on exactly what the individual needs to do to improve.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The school's senior managers, including governors, gain a clear view of the school's overall effectiveness. The checks on teaching are detailed and comprehensive, so teachers know how to improve their lessons. The analysis of standards and results, on the other hand, does not take enough account of the achievement of different groups. The slower progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language, for example, has not been identified as an area for improvement. The targets set by the school are reasonably challenging, but do not promote high expectations. There are some significant strengths in management. The disruption caused by the building works has been minimised, for example, and finances are tightly controlled. However, the school has not responded quickly enough to the changing nature of its cohort, by, for example, providing more opportunities for speaking and reading as the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language has increased.

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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

<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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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?	No
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 January 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blakesley Hall Primary School, Birmingham, B33 8TH

Thank you for talking to us and helping us when we visited your school. We found that you are getting a satisfactory education and making as much progress as we would expect you to. Some of you are just starting to learn English and make slower progress. So, we have asked the teachers to give you more chances to speak in lessons and to make sure you read more. Those of you in Year 6 do well. Your teachers check your work more often, giving them a clearer idea of how to help you do better. We have asked the teachers in all the other years to do the same. Another thing that stops you from doing better is the way too many of you have odd days off school or turn up late in the mornings. We have asked the school to send home letters to your parents in a language they can read, but you can help too. Tell them how important it is that you go to school every day and get to school on time.

We were impressed by your good behaviour in lessons and by how hard you work. You told us that you like coming to school, because your teachers make lessons fun. You also told us that behaviour was not as good at playtime, and we agree. The new building work means that you do not have enough space to run around, but this will change soon. You know what to eat to stay healthy, although sometimes you do not eat so healthily at playtime. Your school gives you lots of help in understanding how other people live. This shows in the way you understand that everybody is equal, no matter what their background. All the grown-ups in the school make sure you are safe.

The people who run the school make sure that all the teachers know how to make their lessons better, because they are good at spotting what works well and what could be improved. Your school has been steadily getting better since it was last inspected. To help them make the school get better even more quickly, we have asked the people who run it to make faster changes when they find out that some of you are not making as much progress as others.

With best wishes for your futures

David Driscoll Lead inspector

**Annex B**

16 January 2007

Dear Pupils

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David Driscoll  
Lead inspector