

Blowers Green Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103771
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	308416
Inspection dates	18–19 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Gerald Griffin

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	271
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steven Raggett
Headteacher	Brenda Shooter
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2003
School address	Blowers Green Road Dudley DY2 8UZ
Telephone number	01384 818490
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves an area of considerable economic hardship. Most children enter the school with skills and experiences that are well below the levels expected for their age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below average. The Nursery is on a separate site, a short walk from the main school. Three quarters of the children who complete nursery transfer to the school's Reception class. Half the school's pupils are of Pakistani heritage. The remainder come from a variety of cultural backgrounds. An acting headteacher is leading the school for this autumn term 2007. A permanent headteacher has been appointed and will start in January 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Blowers Green is a satisfactory school and is improving as a result of good leadership and management. Achievement is satisfactory. The school's leaders have taken effective action to eliminate recent underachievement in the Nursery and Reception classes. They have improved standards in writing, mathematics and science by rigorously checking pupils' progress and improving aspects of teaching, although standards are below average overall. Some aspects of pupils' writing are still relatively weak. Punctuation is not consistently accurate and sentences in longer pieces of written work do not always flow well. This is because there are too few opportunities for pupils to practise writing longer pieces in subjects other than English. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make satisfactory progress although few reach the expected standard by the time they start Year 1. Pupils thrive in the school's happy and friendly atmosphere and their personal development is good. They really enjoy school and this is reflected in their good behaviour, much improved attendance and their enthusiasm for all the school has to offer. Pupils feel safe, make good efforts to maintain a healthy lifestyle and are keen to take responsibility and contribute to the community. There is overwhelming support for the school from parents and they are very pleased with the quality of education the school provides.

In lessons, relationships are good and pupils find their work interesting. This means pupils are keen to learn and behave well. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall rather than good because there are inconsistencies in the level of challenge in lessons. For example, the pace of lessons and teachers' planning do not always match pupils' needs. As a result, some pupils find the work too easy and finish early while others fail to complete work that is too hard. The recently updated curriculum is good and is now providing work that is highly appealing to learners and makes a significant contribution to their enjoyment and eagerness to learn. More opportunities to practise problem-solving are improving progress in mathematics. Pupils particularly enjoy the many visits to museums and other places of interest that are widening their horizons, building their confidence and raising aspirations.

Parents rightly say that the school's pastoral care is first class. Staff provide very sensitive and effective support for children and pupils. A well structured programme ensures pupils at the early stages of learning English make rapid gains in their language skills so that they can participate fully in school life. Care, guidance and support overall are satisfactory because there are inconsistencies in the quality of academic guidance given to pupils. This means that they are not always sure about what they must do to improve their work.

The staff and members of the leadership team enthusiastically share the headteacher's unwavering drive to improve standards and the quality of education. Staff morale is high. The record of recent gains shows the school is well placed to make further improvements.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The recently appointed Foundation Stage leader is taking effective measures to tackle underachievement and improve children's progress through a livelier curriculum, stronger teaching and greater involvement of parents in their children's education. As a result, children now make satisfactory progress overall. Teaching and learning are satisfactory rather than good because planned activities are not yet used consistently well to accelerate children's learning in language and mathematics. Children make good progress in their personal, physical and

creative development, a sign that teaching is improving. Teachers' plans provide an appropriate balance of adult-led and child-led activities. All children quickly settle into the routines of school life because of the effective induction programme. The outside learning area for the Nursery is extensive and used well to develop children's skills but the small size of the reception area restricts the opportunities for children to develop their independence.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the accuracy of pupils' punctuation and the quality of longer pieces of writing.
- Ensure teachers' planning and the pace of lessons match the needs of different pupils so that work is consistently challenging.
- Ensure pupils know what they need to do to improve their work.

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

Standards in English, mathematics and science are below average at the end of Year 6. Achievement is satisfactory overall. Recent underachievement in English has been remedied through improving pupils' spelling and sentence construction in written work. Some weaknesses in writing remain. Pupils' use of capital letters and speech marks is not consistently accurate. In longer pieces of work, such as stories, sentences are not always linked together well which can make the text hard to follow. Progress in mathematics has improved by, for example, giving additional help to pupils whose home language is not English so that they can understand fully the words used in mathematics questions. Improvement in standards in science is the result of more opportunities for pupils to engage in interesting practical work.

The achievement of pupils with learning difficulties and those at the early stages of acquiring English has also improved and is satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are very polite and considerate; they respect each other, adults and the world around them. Pupils cooperate well and readily work in teams. A clear understanding of right and wrong underpins their good behaviour although occasionally pupils call out in lessons. The many opportunities to celebrate each other's heritage make pupils very respectful of people with views and traditions different to their own.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and know they are very well looked after at school. They report that the rare incidences of bullying are quickly and effectively dealt with. Pupils' attendance is average. They enjoy lessons and educational visits and participate readily in the many clubs on offer. They enjoy practical work and appreciate the way achievements are valued and celebrated. They have a good understanding of healthy living. Most take regular exercise and make sensible choices about what they eat, although lunch boxes often contain crisps. Pupils accept responsibility maturely and contribute well to the school and wider community. For example, pupils readily volunteer to act as playground 'pals', collect for charity and entertain elderly people with their singing at Christmas. Although pupils' attitudes to learning are good,

their preparation for secondary school and for future employment is satisfactory because standards, particularly in basic skills of English and mathematics, are below average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy learning and have positive attitudes towards their work because teachers make topics interesting and relevant. There are many signs that teaching is improving. For example, teachers now plan work that actively involves pupils in their learning by providing time for them to discuss ideas in pairs and to learn through trial and error. However, this approach is not consistent and teachers' plans do not always provide pupils with enough challenge or take sufficient account of the pace at which pupils need to work to ensure all make good progress. This means that there are occasions when some pupils work too slowly while others find it hard to keep up. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the learning of pupils with learning difficulties and those at the early stages of learning English.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum gives good support for pupils' personal development. For example, well planned assemblies encourage pupils to reflect on spiritual matters. Science, swimming and physical education lessons promote pupils' understanding and adoption of healthy living. Changes to the curriculum have made work more appealing and enjoyable for pupils by linking subjects together as topics. Changes in the curriculum have successfully tackled underachievement in mathematics and writing, although there are too few opportunities for pupils to practise writing longer pieces of work. The many clubs, sports activities, visits and visitors to school greatly extend and widen pupils' experiences and their appreciation of the world in which they live.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The staff's excellent knowledge of the needs of individual pupils ensures that learners are cared for very effectively. The learning mentor provides effective support for pupils with behaviour difficulties and emotional problems by providing encouragement and advice on such matters as making relationships. The learning link worker provides valuable advice to families in such areas as homework, attendance and punctuality, so that they can support their children's education. This has been most effective in raising attendance to its current average level. The school is working hard with parents to reduce the number of long holidays taken in term-time in an effort to reduce absence further. The school works effectively with a wide range of external agencies to support pupils' welfare and education. For example, it works closely with language experts to ensure pupils from abroad settle quickly and take a full part in school life. Health and safety measures and child protection procedures are robust.

The quality of academic guidance varies too much and is satisfactory overall. Pupils do not always get detailed individual advice through marking or other feedback on how they can make their work better.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The acting headteacher provides strong leadership and a clear direction for the school. The leadership team has established rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of education giving the school a clear understanding of its effectiveness, its strengths and what needs to be improved. Senior leaders have brought about many improvements. For example, they have worked with staff to sharpen the teaching of writing and mathematics and have raised standards in information and communication technology by providing new computers and software. They have also worked effectively with parents to improve attendance.

The school sets challenging targets to raise achievement and uses them well. Pupils' progress towards their targets is reviewed each term to ensure any underachievement is quickly spotted. Effective additional help, such as booster classes, is then given to pupils whose progress slows so they catch up.

The school uses staff well to keep teaching groups small and this is contributing to the improvements in progress in writing, mathematics and science.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors are very supportive and work hard on behalf of the school. They have a clear grasp of the standard of education the school provides, but are too reliant on the headteacher for this perspective and are not yet providing robust challenges to the school on its performance.

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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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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?	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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	2
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

20 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Blowers Green Primary School, Dudley DY2 8UZ

We enjoyed our visit to your school. You were very polite and friendly and you made us feel most welcome. We enjoyed the discussions we had with you about the work and activities you do at school. You clearly get on with each other and the adults in school very well and you are rightly proud of the school's happy atmosphere. We decided Blowers Green is a satisfactory school. We also think it is improving. Here are some of our findings:

- You make satisfactory progress in your lessons in Years 1 to 6 and satisfactory progress in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Your teaching is satisfactory.
- The standards you reach are below average in English, mathematics and science.
- You really enjoy school and feel very safe and secure.
- You behave well.
- You have good relationships with your teachers and you work hard for them.
- The curriculum provides many visits that extend your ideas well.
- Adults in the school look after you very well.
- The headteacher leads the school well and teachers are working hard to make sure the school gets better.

- We have asked the school to do three things to help it improve further:
 - Help you improve your punctuation and the quality of longer pieces of writing.
 - Improve teaching so that you all make good progress.
 - Make sure you know how to make your work better.

You can help the school by continuing to try your best in lessons.

We wish you all success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Gerald Griffin Lead inspector

Annex B

20 September 2007

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Yours sincerely

Gerald Griffin
Lead inspector