

Blackheath Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103981
Local Authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	308472
Inspection date	4 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Marion Thompson

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	461
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jill Rushton
Headteacher	Lesley King
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2005
School address	Britannia Road Rowley Regis B65 9NF
Telephone number	01215 591033
Fax number	01215 599559

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school. The following issues were investigated: the impact of the school's strategies to improve pupils' academic performance, especially in writing, reading, mathematics and science; the effect of measures to improve behaviour and attendance; and the extent to which senior and subject leaders are successful in driving improvements, especially in the quality of teaching and learning. Evidence was collected from discussion with pupils, staff and the chair of governors, visits to lessons, sampling pupils' work, analysis of parents' questionnaires, a walk around the school site and scrutiny of the school's assessment and safeguarding records. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but no evidence was found to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a very large school, where most pupils come from White British backgrounds. The few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds speak English well. On entry to the Nursery, children have skills below those expected for their age, particularly in language and social development. By the time they start in Year 1, children's attainment is broadly at the level expected. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school, which is improving steadily. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and is well matched to children's needs. Despite severe staffing difficulties over the last year, results in national tests have mostly either improved or remained at a similar level to previous years. Except in English, pupils broadly reached or exceeded their moderately challenging targets. The headteacher, supported by staff and governors, has succeeded in keeping the school on a steady course.

Pupils reach average standards in national tests by the time they leave school, and their achievement is satisfactory. They make good progress in mathematics and science. This is because teachers use their expertise well to encourage pupils to engage in challenging problem-solving activities and investigations. Pupils welcome this level of challenge, with many identifying mathematics as their favourite subject. The strong emphasis the school places on reading has resulted in more rapid progress for pupils in Key Stage 1, but there is further to go to catch up. Standards in writing, an area of weakness throughout the school, are improving rapidly. Improvements are resulting from pupils being given clearer guidance about what they should be learning, careful preparation for writing through discussion beforehand, and good attention to enriching pupils' vocabulary. This approach prompted a Year 2 class, for example, to produce some very interesting beginnings to a story. However, because pupils have a lot of catching up to do, standards remain too low in writing across the school and also in reading in Key Stage 1. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because they benefit from well-targeted support.

Sound leadership and management contribute to pupils' steadily improving achievement and good personal development. The headteacher provides a clear educational direction through planning for improvement based on an accurate evaluation of the school's work. Better monitoring of pupils' progress is helping to identify and rectify problems at an earlier stage than in the past. Subject leaders work hard to promote improvement through monitoring and supporting the work of their colleagues. For example, improving teaching and learning in key areas such as mathematics, writing and reading is due to well-targeted staff development and better long-term planning. Governors provide satisfactory support and challenge based on a broadly accurate view of the work of the school.

Improvements in pupils' achievement are being promoted by sound and improving teaching. Teachers form strong relationships with their pupils, which they use well to encourage good personal and social development as well as sound academic progress. As a result, pupils enjoy school and have extremely positive attitudes to learning. Little time is wasted because behaviour in class is excellent. Pupils work confidently and safely, treating each other with respect. Teachers use their expertise well, for example, in mathematics, to motivate and challenge pupils. However, not all lessons present pupils with the same high level of challenge. In a minority, work is not planned to meet the needs of all pupils. Advice given in class on how to improve work and reach targets is inconsistent. By contrast, marking, previously identified by the school as a weakness, now provides specific guidance which pupils find useful.

The school works well with other agencies to ensure pupils' health, safety and well-being. Pupils benefit from a high level of pastoral care from all adults in school. Consequently, despite the reservations of a small number of parents, pupils feel safe. The school's systems ensure that bullying and racism are dealt with effectively when any rare incidents occur. Behaviour at

lunchtime is a little boisterous and there are too few places for quiet activities. The school is giving careful consideration to the suggestions of the School Council on how this may be improved. Because the school values their views, and sometimes acts on them, pupils take their responsibilities to the school and wider community seriously. They have a good awareness of how to live a healthy lifestyle and enjoy taking regular exercise. They make increasingly healthy choices in what they eat, supported well by the healthy meals provided by the school.

Most pupils attend school regularly and arrangements are in place to encourage good attendance. Despite the school's efforts, however, a large number of pupils still take holidays during term time. As a result, the level of absence is too high, especially in the Foundation Stage.

Pupils are soundly prepared for the next stage of their education. They develop good social skills because strong attention to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is embodied in all the activities the school provides. For example, the well-designed curriculum ensures that all pupils have a wide range of educational visits to give them enriching first-hand experiences. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, pupils have sound basic skills to support their further learning. The success of the school's strategies to raise standards and maintain good personal development shows that it is soundly placed to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and it is well led. Children get off to a good start in the Nursery because all activities have a strong focus on developing their communication and social skills, which are areas of particular weakness. Good quality care ensures children settle quickly into a routine and begin to develop independence. Throughout the Foundation Stage there is a sensible balance between activities children choose for themselves and those directed by the teacher. Despite some unevenness between classes, teaching is lively and well organised, enabling children to make rapid progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in writing throughout the school and in reading in Key Stage 1 by ensuring that all pupils are set challenging work and that feedback in lessons provides clear guidance to pupils on what they need to do to improve.
- Work more closely with parents to improve attendance, especially in the Foundation Stage.

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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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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	3
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?	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?	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

4 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blackheath Primary School, Rowley Regis B65 9NF

I really enjoyed being at your school. You are very polite and I especially enjoyed talking to the lively group I met in the afternoon. A number of your parents and carers wrote to me, so please discuss this letter with them. Your views are very positive, so you will not be surprised that I found that your school provides you with a satisfactory and improving education. The education provided in the Foundation Stage is good. These are the main things I found out:

- You make good progress in the Foundation Stage because the activities provided are well matched to your needs and teaching is good.
- You make satisfactory progress in Years 1 to 6, reaching standards similar to most pupils your age. Progress is improving. However, reading in Years 1 and 2 and writing throughout the school could still be better. Most of you make good progress in mathematics and science.
- Your progress is getting better because of sound and improving teaching. Your excellent behaviour in class and positive attitudes to your work also help.
- You enjoy school and show respect for each other. However, occasionally you are a little too boisterous around school and in the playground. You have a good awareness of how to stay healthy.
- You make a good contribution to the school and wider community. Through the School Council, you have made some sensible suggestions to improve behaviour at lunchtime.
- The curriculum the school offers interests and motivates you, especially the visits outside school.
- The school takes good personal care of you and helps develop your confidence.
- The headteacher and other staff are working on the right things to ensure the school continues to improve.

There are a few things I have asked the school to improve:

- I would like the school to help you to do better in writing in all years and in reading in Years 1 and 2 by making sure that you are given work that makes you think hard and by giving you good advice on how to improve your work and reach your targets.
- The school needs to work with your parents to ensure that everyone attends school regularly, especially in the Foundation Stage.

You too can help by continuing to work hard and making sure you attend school regularly.

Best wishes Marion Thompson Lead inspector

Annex B



4 October 2007

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Best wishes
Marion Thompson
Lead inspector