

# Blakenall Heath Junior School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104144
<b>Local Authority</b>	Walsall
<b>Inspection number</b>	308527
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Terry Elston

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	213
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Christine Boxold
<b>Headteacher</b>	Peter Heath
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 February 2004
<b>School address</b>	Field Road Bloxwich Walsall WS3 3JF
<b>Telephone number</b>	01922 710145
<b>Fax number</b>	01922 497355

---

<b>Age group</b>	7–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 June 2008
<b>Inspection number</b>	308527

---

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This average-sized school admits pupils mostly from the small town of Bloxwich. Nearly all pupils come from White British families and speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is much higher than normally found. Over a third of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils' attainment on entry, particularly in terms of language development, is below average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school's provision is satisfactory. Pupils make steady progress from their starting points but, while their achievements are satisfactory, standards are below average by the end of Year 6, and particularly so in science.

The development of pupils' personal and social skills is a significant strength of the school. They enjoy coming to school and try hard to succeed. Attendance is satisfactory. Nearly all attend regularly, and rigorous measures to reduce unnecessary absences have proved effective. They behave well, both in class and around the school because adults make the rules clear and apply them fairly and consistently. They take responsibility readily, and make an important contribution to the improvement of their community by being involved in the school council and by acting as members of the Buddy Patrol to ensure that pupils are safe and happy at break times.

Pupils gain a good understanding of the need to live healthy lives through the effective personal, social and health education curriculum. They speak knowledgeably about the right foods to eat and enjoy the regular opportunities for physical exercise. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of visits and visitors that help bring topics to life. The planning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good, and recent initiatives to improve pupils' writing skills in groups withdrawn from classes are bearing fruit. However, some of these pupils are also taken out for mathematics work, and this means they spend four mornings a week without the stimulus of other pupils in the class.

Pupils speak highly of their teachers, whom they say are 'kind and helpful'. Teachers work hard at developing good relationships with pupils, which helps to make school a happy place. They are good at explaining new work and using questions to check that pupils understand. Their subject knowledge is generally good, although the school is rightly focusing on improving their skills in the teaching of experimental work in science in order to raise standards.

Parents are pleased with the school and are justified in feeling that it cares for their children well. Pupils feel safe at school because adults make it very clear that they should respect one another's feelings. As one pupil put it, 'It's great here because we make really good friends and never get bullied.' The school tracks pupils' progress carefully, and most teachers use this information effectively to show them how to move on to the next levels in their learning. The leaders recognise the need to ensure that this is the case for all teachers if standards are to be raised further.

The headteacher has helped to create a strong sense of teamwork amongst staff. His vision is clear, and expectations of pupils' work and behaviour are high. He is rightly proud of the way pupils have a reputation in the area for their politeness and responsible behaviour. He is supported enthusiastically by other leaders who evaluate the effectiveness of their areas of responsibility competently. The governing body supports the school enthusiastically and is not afraid to hold the leaders to account. This helps to explain why the school has made improvements since the last inspection and why it is set to do even better.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve the teaching and learning in science, particularly relating to experimental work.

- Ensure that teachers make it clear to pupils how they can move on to the next steps in their learning.
- Give pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities more opportunities to work alongside others in their class.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' standards by Year 6 in English, mathematics and science are below average. This represents satisfactory achievement and steady progress given their low starting points. Standards have risen steadily over the last five years in English and mathematics, but in science they have not made the same gains and results were very low in the 2007 national tests. This year, while standards in science show an improvement, pupils' experimental skills are still weak compared with other aspects of the subject. Pupils' writing skills have had an adverse affect on the overall English results in the past. However, new initiatives to include more writing tasks in all subjects and specialist teaching for pupils with learning difficulties are starting to raise standards. More able pupils make satisfactory progress overall, and do well in mathematics because teachers give them tasks that make the most of their skills.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Nearly all pupils attend regularly and say how much they enjoy school because of the friends they make and the interesting lessons. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils develop a clear sense of right and wrong and behave well. They speak knowledgeably about how to stay safe and live healthily. One put it in a nutshell when stating, 'If you don't eat the right food and keep fit you get weak and can't run fast.' They show good levels of maturity as they think deeply about issues such as personal safety and bullying, and are never afraid to ask questions to make things clearer. They show their concern for their school community by making improvements through the school council. They raise substantial funds for charities and act as members of the 'Buddy Patrol' to help keep pupils safe. They are adequately prepared for the future and enjoy worthwhile opportunities to be involved in mini-enterprise projects, such as working with a local organisation to produce a school magazine. Most have a reasonable idea of their targets from their teachers and what they need to do to improve. This varies from class to class however, and the school recognises the need to make this more consistent.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

A strength of the teaching is the way teachers forge good relationships with pupils so that they have the confidence to answer questions and without fear of failure. Teachers manage behaviour well with high expectations and clear rules that pupils respect. They capture pupils' interest effectively by using interactive whiteboards to illustrate their teaching. For example, one teacher helped pupils grasp the idea of probability by showing on the whiteboard whether an outcome was 'likely', 'certain' or 'unlikely'. Teachers generally plan literacy and numeracy lessons well to give pupils a good balance of whole-class work and group tasks matched to their abilities. In a few cases however, the level of challenge is similar for all pupils, and while some cruise

through the work, others find it too hard. Teachers use 'talking partners' effectively to enable pupils to share ideas with each other and this approach leads to some good learning. While teachers' subject knowledge is generally good, not all feel confident in planning work at the right level in science, and this restricts pupils' progress.

Teachers assess pupils' work regularly using detailed systems that give a clear picture of their progress. Their marking is good in writing, where it provides clear guidance on how pupils can improve, but less helpful in other subjects where it is often only ticks, crosses and brief comments on how well they have done.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum has a strong focus on literacy and numeracy skills, which ensures that pupils gain confidence in reading and number. In writing, the school has recently focused on encouraging pupils to write more in all subjects in order to raise standards and this approach is working. The curricular provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory, but involves too much time out of mainstream lessons for some of them. In one mathematics lesson where they were included with other pupils, they coped very well with good support from the teaching assistant and were justifiably proud of their achievements.

The school provides a good range of popular activities at lunchtime and after school to extend learning and some useful visits to add interest to topics. Provision for personal, social and health education is good, and gives pupils valuable opportunities to discuss their worries and learn how to stay healthy.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The good care, guidance and support are valued very highly by both pupils and parents. As one parent said, 'The staff are good at communicating with us on important issues such as behaviour and bullying.' Teachers are thorough in their recording of pupils' academic and personal development, but do not always make clear to pupils what they need to do to move up to the next level. The school rightly has this as one of its main priorities for improvement. Health and safety procedures are good and reviewed regularly to ensure pupils' well-being. As a result, the school is a secure and happy place in which pupils enjoy learning. Child protection systems are robust and all staff have had good recent training. The school does much to encourage pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles, as has been recognised by a recent Healthy Schools award. The school has strong links with other professionals such as education welfare officers and health staff who provide valuable support for the school.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher leads with a clear focus on raising standards and developing pupils' personal skills. He is not afraid to take on initiatives that will improve the school and has developed good partnerships with other schools to make the best of each other's expertise. The headteacher is supported well by other senior staff who share his vision and work well as a team. The leaders have good systems to evaluate the school's effectiveness based on rigorous analysis of pupils' progress and they use this information well to set the school's future priorities. For example,

when test results showed that pupils' writing was weak, the school focused on providing more opportunities for them to write in all subjects and this raised standards. The same is now happening in science where more emphasis is being placed on investigational work and improving teachers' subject knowledge. The leaders monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching regularly, but not always with the necessary rigour to ensure that lessons are consistently good and assessment is always used effectively. Governors are both critical and supportive and have a secure grasp of what needs to be done to raise standards. Few, however, have the time to come into school and evaluate the provision first hand.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**



**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
--	-----------------------

### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<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?	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

16 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blakenall Heath Junior School, Walsall WS3 3JF

Thank you for your important contributions to this inspection. It was a pleasure to meet so many of you who showed such pride in your work. We enjoyed talking to some of you who told us a lot about your school. Your school is satisfactory, which means it is good in some ways and has some things it could improve upon.

What we found out about your school.

- You work hard and make similar progress to pupils in most schools, although you could do better in science.
- You have a good knowledge of how to keep safe and live healthy lives.
- Your teachers make lessons fun and help you when you find things difficult.
- You enjoy the activities planned for you and the wide range of visits and visitors that make learning interesting.
- You behave well, both in class and around the school. You enjoy taking responsibility, and the school council and Buddy Patrol do a good job.
- The staff and governors make sure your school runs smoothly and know how to improve your school further.
- All the adults take good care of you and are always there if you need help.

What we would like the school to do now.

- Help you to improve your work in science. You can help by doing your very best work when asked to do experiments.
- Make sure that you all know your targets and what you need to do to improve still further.
- Allow those who need extra help with their English and mathematics work to spend more time in the class with the rest of you.

With best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Mr Terry Elston Lead inspector