

Blackshaw Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105175
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	308788
Inspection dates	5–6 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Margaret Lewis

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	228
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Pippa Barrington
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Watkin
Date of previous school inspection	9 February 2004
School address	Bideford Drive Bolton Lancashire BL2 6TE
Telephone number	01204 333505
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Blackshaw Primary is an average sized school situated on the edge of Bolton. It is designated by the local authority as an inclusive school for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties. This is reflected by the above average proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Pupils come from a variety of social backgrounds. Most are White British and all speak English as their first language. A small number of pupils are looked after by the local authority. The school holds the Basic Skills Award. A new headteacher and senior management team were appointed in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Blackshaw provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils and gives satisfactory value for money. Personal and social development is a strength. This is because of the good pastoral care and support that the school gives its pupils within a warm and welcoming environment. Links with parents are good and the great majority of parents are very satisfied with the school and what it provides. They particularly like that their children enjoy coming to school.

Standards are average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 but fewer pupils reach the higher levels in English and boys' attainment has lagged behind that of girls. The thrust for improvement in standards has been hampered by a significant number of continuing staff absences over the last three years. The recently appointed headteacher and senior management team have introduced a range of initiatives, including more focused staff training, designed to bring about improvements in pupils' achievement. The school is now working intently on improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising standards. Inspection findings show that, in a very short time, these initiatives are beginning to work. Standards are improving due to strong leadership, a stable staff, improved teaching and close tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress. However, it is too soon to see the full impact from recent improvements, particularly in respect of English. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 1 to 6. Progress in English, particularly in writing, lags behind that in mathematics and science. Achievement is good in the Foundation Stage where children make good progress and reach the levels expected of them by the time they begin Year 1.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with evidence of consistently good and better teaching in Reception and Year 6 that sets a good example for other teachers to follow. The strong leadership team has been successful, with the valuable help of the local authority, in eliminating any unsatisfactory teaching and raising the overall quality. Good imaginative teaching results in the acceleration of pupils' progress in Year 6. Nevertheless, there are some weaker aspects of teaching that cause slower learning compared to the best in the school. For example, some pupils lack enough time to finish their writing and this limits their progress in English overall. Moreover, the marking of pupils' work and individual targets for improvement do not always give sufficient guidance to pupils to help them improve. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support. The curriculum is satisfactory and is well supported by a good range of clubs and visitors into school and residential visits for older pupils. The school has satisfactory resources for information and communication technology (ICT), although there is limited opportunity for children to use computers in all classrooms. The school is working well to solve this shortcoming.

The headteacher provides good leadership and has shown strength of purpose in rapidly analysing what needs to be done in the school and tackling the priorities for development. She is supported by an effective team of senior staff and governors and there is a joint vision and determination to improve further. Self-evaluation is good, involving all leaders and providing an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas to develop. Rapid action has been taken and the impact of this so far on raising achievement demonstrates that the school has a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good teaching ensures that children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage. Most children start in the Nursery with skills that are below those expected for their age. They make consistently good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes because children's progress is regularly monitored and work is well matched to their needs. Most reach the expected goals as they enter Year 1, with many exceeding them, especially in mathematics. Thorough induction procedures ensure that children settle quickly into school routines. Children are happy and well cared for in a secure, attractive learning environment. Skilful planning results in a strong emphasis on developing children's writing. Moreover, the varied range of practical activities really engage their interest. As a result, children show positive attitudes to their learning and behave well. However, the outdoor area is limited and restricts the opportunities to extend the children's learning experiences, especially in physical and creative skills. Nevertheless, good leadership and management has identified this relative weakness and has plans to rectify it.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in English, particularly in writing, across both key stages.
- Improve the overall quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistent with the best practice in the school.
- Ensure that pupils have a good understanding of what they individually 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

Achievement is satisfactory. In 2007, standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science were broadly average overall with pupils achieving better in mathematics and science than in English. This pattern is typical of recent results at the end of Year 6. Standards at the end of Year 2 vary from year to year with mathematics being stronger than reading and writing. Fewer pupils than expected nationally reach the higher Level 3 in reading by the end of Key Stage 1 and the higher Level 5 in English in Key Stage 2. The school has identified this and is addressing the progress of pupils of all abilities, particularly boys, in both reading and writing. Pupils who find learning difficult are well supported and achieve satisfactorily. Pupils are beginning to make better progress in English and mathematics: in the current Year 6, pupils are making particularly good progress in these subjects. In 2007, the school exceeded its targets in mathematics and narrowly missed them in English. Challenging but achievable school targets are in place for the current year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school, as is reflected by their good attendance and good attitudes to learning. They talk enthusiastically about the practical activities such as the games in mathematics that make learning, 'interesting and fun'. They have a good understanding of keeping safe, fit and healthy. The varied range of sporting activities contributes well to this.

The school is currently involved in working towards the Healthy Schools Award. Pupils respond well to the promotion of healthy eating habits with the healthy tuck-shop at break time. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are polite and friendly, get on well together and behave well in and around school. They take their responsibilities seriously and older pupils show good levels of care for younger children as they act as prefects and play-leaders at lunchtimes. The school council is actively involved in decision-making and feels that they are listened to. They are proud of their successful bid to fund a forthcoming African Week in school. The school has good links with the local church and local community. Pupils' development of the basic skills in English and mathematics, designed to equip them well for future life and the workplace, is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Significant staff absences over the past three years have had an adverse effect on the quality of teaching and learning and on pupils' progress. Nevertheless, teaching is satisfactory overall. It is best in the Foundation Stage and in Year 6. Unsatisfactory teaching has been eliminated by an intensive programme of coaching, support and staff training. In the better teaching, for example in Year 6, pupils are motivated and enthused, and work well independently. Lessons are brisk and well organised and teaching assistants are well directed. However, this is not consistently the case. Some teachers' explanations are not always clear and pupils are not always given sufficient time to complete their independent activities, especially in writing. Marking of pupils' work, in some cases, is not helpful enough to enable them to improve and teachers' expectation of pupils' presentation is not always high enough. It is this variation in teaching that the school is tackling, but there has not been enough time for measures introduced to have created uniform improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. The school is in the process of planning a more creative curriculum, linking subjects together, to make learning more relevant and exciting for the pupils. Initiatives to improve standards in reading and writing are already beginning to have an impact on achievement. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to use their writing and ICT skills to support their learning in other subjects. The good provision for personal development ensures that pupils develop a good understanding of staying safe, fit and healthy. Music is a strength of the school. All Year 3 pupils have the opportunity to play stringed instruments such as violins and cellos and pupils enjoy performing in music festivals and concerts throughout the year. A varied range of visits, visitors and after-school activities, together with the teaching of Spanish across the school, effectively extend pupils' learning experiences and add to their enjoyment of learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are well cared for. Most parents agree with this. Measures are in place to ensure pupils feel safe in school and any rare instances of bullying are dealt with quickly. All systems to safeguard pupils' health, safety and well-being are robust and meet current requirements.

Relationships are good: pupils feel valued and know there is always an adult to talk over any worries or concerns. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the more vulnerable pupils are well supported by able teaching assistants, the learning mentor and outside specialist help when needed. As a result these pupils are fully included in all activities and make the same progress as their classmates. Pupils' progress is regularly monitored and information from this is used effectively to identify where extra support or challenge is needed. Target setting, for individuals, has recently been introduced, but pupils are not yet sufficiently involved in this process. As a result they are not always clear about what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The recently appointed headteacher and senior management team are guiding school improvement well. In a very short time the headteacher has analysed the strengths and areas for development in the school and these are being tackled vigorously. As yet, it is too soon to see the full impact of all that has been put into place but there is a sense of rejuvenation amongst the pupils, staff, governors and parents, all of whom appreciate recent improvements. The school's self-evaluation is good. The school has identified the right avenues for improvement and taken valuable steps along the way. Governance is satisfactory overall; governors' management of the school's budget and resources is sound. There have been frequent changes of governors over past years but a full complement of governors is now in place. Thus the training to involve governors more closely in self-evaluation is relevant and timely.

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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	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	2
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?	3
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	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	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

Inspection of Blackshaw Primary School, Bolton, BL2 6TE

Thank you very much for welcoming the inspectors into your school. We enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. Your school gives you a satisfactory standard of education. It is clear that you enjoy the activities that you take part in and some of you do really well in your lessons and in your musical and sporting activities. We were impressed by the way in which you were polite and helpful to us. Your behaviour is good and we enjoyed our time at Blackshaw. Your teachers and all the adults in the school look after you well and you know how to keep safe and healthy. You are beginning to know what it is to eat healthily and enjoy the healthy tuck-shop in school.

We think standards at your school could be even better. So we have asked your headteacher and governors to make sure that all of you do as well as you possibly can in English, particularly in writing, so that your results are as good - or even better - than those in mathematics. We have also asked that all lessons are as good as the best to help you all learn equally well. Finally, we have asked the teachers to make sure that you all know how you can improve your work yourselves.

Your headteacher knows exactly what to do next to help this happen and we hope that you will work hard and play your part to bring it about.

Thank you once again for your help and best wishes for your future learning.