

Blackburn Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106834
Local Authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	309241
Inspection dates	8–9 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Fiona Gowers

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	281
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Gilling
Headteacher	Mr Brian Walker
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2004
School address	Baring Road Blackburn Rotherham South Yorkshire S61 2BU
Telephone number	01709 740412
Fax number	01709 550948

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average primary school serves a socio-economically mixed area. Almost all pupils are White British and very few pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school has received the Activemark, Artsmark Silver, FA Charter Mark, Healthy Schools Award, Excellence in Enterprise Award and a Leading Aspect Award for Assessment for Learning.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Blackburn Primary is a good school which is at the heart of its local community. It is especially successful in promoting pupils' personal development and well-being, which are outstanding. The headteacher fosters strong relationships and inspires everyone by his passion to improve further what the school provides for its pupils. The team approach ensures that the whole staff work together effectively to provide an extremely supportive environment for pupils. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, sharing comments such as, 'We couldn't wish for a better school.' In lessons, pupils' behaviour is often exemplary and they listen very attentively, striving to do their best. Pupils care for each other sensitively and willingly take on responsibilities around the school. Blackburn pupils have received a local Best Team Work Award in recognition of their ability to work extremely well with each other when solving problems and making decisions.

When they join the Foundation Stage, children's skills are below those normal for their age, with an increasing proportion of children being well below this level. By the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average, although they are higher in reading, mathematics and science than in writing. Pupils make good progress and achieve well, as a result of good teaching and learning throughout school. A positive learning environment is created as teachers and teaching assistants work with enthusiasm to make lessons interesting, motivating pupils to learn. 'We enjoy lessons because they're fun!' enthused a group of pupils. Working towards individual targets motivates pupils to try hard. They delight in the opportunity to assess their own learning, striving to improve their work further and keeping the school motto in mind - 'Only our best is good enough!' Pupils regularly discuss with their teachers and with each other the next step required to improve their work and this helps them make good progress. On occasion, however, the more able pupils are not sufficiently stretched and challenged in their written work and this limits their progress in reaching higher standards.

The school's curriculum is good; it is particularly effective in facilitating pupils' personal development. Imaginative links are developing between subjects, which bring relevance and excitement to learning. For example, older pupils studying Macbeth brought their learning to life by making models of the characters, designing a backdrop and sound effects for animation films of the play. A very good range of sporting and out-of-school activities adds interest and enjoyment to school life and promotes healthy lifestyles.

Blackburn Primary provides good value for money. Raising levels of achievement and enhancing the personal development and well-being of every child are at the heart of everything the school does. School leadership acted swiftly to deal with a dip in standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2006, by developing a rigorous tracking system to monitor progress and highlight any child who may be in need of extra support. As a consequence, standards improved in 2007. The management structures put in place by senior leaders and the involvement of leaders at all levels, including governors, have maintained good rates of progress and a strong caring environment. This indicates that the school has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children settle very well into the welcoming and calm environment of the Foundation Stage. They cannot wait to take part in the good range of stimulating activities around the topic being

covered. For example, children enjoyed being in the 'guinea pig club' helping to look after their real guinea pigs Dandy and Lion, comparing toy animals and sorting them according to particular criteria, and making animal biscuits and clay animals. Outdoor activities support children's learning well. Staff are working hard to improve the outdoor learning environment to ensure that it supports all areas of learning better. Thorough assessments ensure that learning activities are well matched to children's needs. Children make particularly rapid progress in the area of personal, social and health education (PSHE), helping them develop positive attitudes to learning. Parents are very appreciative of the excellent care and support provided by all staff, as summarised by the comment, 'Since starting at Blackburn School my three year old baby has transformed into a confident, independent and sociable four-year-old.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the achievement of some of the more able pupils in their writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. Good teaching enables pupils to reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6, from their below-average starting points. In Years 1 and 2 pupils build well on previous learning and make consistently good progress in all subjects. The best progress in Key Stage 2 is in science and mathematics, with the proportion of pupils gaining above-average standards matching the national picture. Although standards in English at the end of Year 6 are broadly average overall, the proportion of pupils gaining above-average standards in the 2007 national tests was lower than nationally. This is because some of the more able pupils do not write fluently in a range of styles at above-average standards. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the skilled and focused support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

At the heart of this effective school is the way in which pupils' self-esteem and confidence are fostered. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. A high level of trust and respect leads to strong relationships throughout school and very positive attitudes to learning. 'I like everything at school. Everyone helps you do your best' is a view shared by many pupils. They feel safe in school, and attendance rates are above average. Pupils show a high level of care and concern for each other, in the way they work in class and also in the various responsibilities they take on, whether it is working to improve the school and local communities as a school councillor, playground leader, Eco group member or raising money for an array of charities in the wider community. Pupils readily take part in a very wide range of sporting activities and talk with confidence about how to have a healthy lifestyle. All pupils are able to develop key life skills, preparing them for the world of work, whether it be as budding entrepreneurs in the 'make ø5 blossom' project or as designers in the 'build it' project.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and work rate. Pupils rise to these demands; consequently their behaviour is exemplary and learning progresses at a good rate. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use a range of effective strategies which enable pupils to be active in their learning. Teaching assistants who are responsible for working with pupils requiring extra support sensitively use a range of skills and expertise to help those pupils make good progress. Good quality work in pairs and speaking and listening activities stretch pupils in their thinking and enable them to 'bounce ideas off each other'. Pupils are encouraged to be independent in their learning, to evaluate how well they are doing and to identify how they can improve their work further. The school's Leading Aspect Award for Assessment for Learning is recognition of its success in this area. Most lessons have a very clear focus and careful assessments generally lead to work being well matched to the needs of learners. In a few lessons, however, the focus for learning is not so clear. This causes a few pupils to lose concentration and their progress dips as they sit listening for too long.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum meets statutory requirements and the needs of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Learning experiences build effectively on what pupils already know and what they need to learn next. Provision in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) is good. The English curriculum does not always ensure sufficient challenge for the more able pupils in their written work. Teachers are developing useful links between subjects, in order to increase pupils' enjoyment and give them opportunity to develop their skills. The good range of practical activities helps keep learning fun. Younger pupils are motivated to work hard in the 'Lewis Hamilton challenge', for example, and older pupils enjoy mathematical games which reinforce multiplication skills. The numerous opportunities for enterprise activities contribute to excellent personal development. The commitment of the school to promoting personal development is seen in the range of awards in this area.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents appreciate the strong, supportive pastoral care for pupils. 'All staff truly care about every single child's development,' is a view shared by many parents. The school knows its pupils very well. Pupils are confident that their teachers would help them with any difficulties. Procedures for protecting children meet current requirements. Attention to health and safety is meticulous. Staff enable the more vulnerable pupils to resolve personal problems so that they can continue to learn and make progress. Pupils are given excellent support through initiatives such as positive play and the 'ENABLE' programme. Academic guidance is good and is leading to good rates of progress, as pupils work towards their targets. The school is working hard to stretch pupils further but this has not had full effect in writing yet. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language receive good individual support within the school and through well established links with outside agencies. This school is well prepared to meet the whole range of pupils' needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides inspirational leadership. He is well supported by a skilled leadership team. There is a strong team spirit among staff and pupils alike, where everyone's contribution is valued. Staff have high expectations of pupils, being readily prepared to 'go the extra mile' in their care and support. The 'developing excellence plan' accurately identifies what needs to be improved further. Whole-school initiatives to improve the teaching of science have led to rising levels of attainment, particularly among the more able pupils. In line with whole-school priorities, there has been particularly effective leadership in mathematics, English, science, ICT and PSHE. Challenging targets are set for pupils' achievement and a close eye is kept on pupils' progress. Those not making expected progress are given support. Governors have a strong commitment to the school and amply fulfil the role of critical friend.

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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?	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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?	2

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	2
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	2
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 Blackburn Primary School, Rotherham, S61 2BU

Thank you very much for helping us with our work when we visited your school.

We enjoyed meeting you and talking with you. We judged that your school is good. Almost all aspects about it are good and the way your personal skills and qualities are developed is outstanding. You are right to be proud of your school and your parents are pleased that you go there. These are the things that we found are best about your school.

- You are very well behaved and polite.
- You work very hard and are well taught and so you are making good progress with your work.
- You enjoy the many exciting and interesting activities provided for you.
- The way you are encouraged to have a say in what goes on at school in lessons and through the school council is good.
- You are very good at working with others in a team.

The adults at school look after you very well and they are good at giving you the help that you need. We have asked them to help you reach higher standards in your writing.

Thank you for helping us so much with the inspection at school. Keep working hard and remember your motto: 'Only our best is good enough!'

We wish you well in the future.