

Blackhall Colliery Primary School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 114201 |
| Local Authority | Durham |
| Inspection number | 311513 |
| Inspection dates | 22–23 May 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Joan Elton |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 313 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr William Greenwell |
| Headteacher | Mr Matt Younger |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 May 2005 |
| School address | Middle Street Blackhall Colliery Hartlepool TS27 4NA |
| Telephone number | 0191 586 4049 |
| Fax number | 0191 586 8352 |

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|--------------------------|----------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an above average sized school, serving a predominantly White British population with a very small percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average, and although serving a mixed catchment area there are pockets of high social and economic disadvantage. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above the national average. The school has acquired Healthy Schools status and the Activemark Gold Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with an excellent Foundation Stage. The school provides good teaching and learning, effective care, support and guidance and a sound curriculum. These ensure that all pupils achieve well, in terms of good personal development and good academic progress. Most parents are very positive about the school and find staff very approachable. The school has taken effective steps to promote improvement since the last inspection.

After a period of prolonged instability the school has benefited greatly from a year of improved staffing continuity and a settled leadership and management structure. Much has been achieved because of the determination of the leadership team, the hard work of staff and the excellent support given by the local authority. New and sustainable systems for tracking pupils' progress and monitoring teaching and learning have been successfully introduced, along with curricular initiatives. These have resulted in better learning and an improved match of teaching to individual learning needs. As a consequence most pupils have made good progress since September 2007. Year 6 pupils, who entered Nursery at a very early age of learning and development, are now on track to reach national expectations.

Pupils say they enjoy school and feel safe there; they appreciate the range of learning opportunities the school offers and enjoy participating in the many sporting and community events. Their behaviour is good, and much improved recently, due in part to counselling and peer mentoring. Teaching and learning are good and there is much consistency across the school. Teachers have good subject knowledge and make learning activities interesting. The curriculum is satisfactory and rightly gives priority to English and mathematics. Opportunities to develop writing across the curriculum are missed however and sometimes the needs of a few Key Stage 2 pupils are not fully met because the school's arrangements for the teaching of phonics are underdeveloped. The school shows high standards of care and everything is done to ensure pupils' safety, security and well-being. Personal development is given priority from Nursery and continues throughout the school, with special programmes for the expression and understanding of feelings and emotion. Academic guidance is also good. Systems for tracking pupils' progress are now secure and these, together with constructive marking and target setting, inform pupils on how to improve their work.

Leadership and management at all levels are good. The headteacher has used this period of staff stability very well, to set and communicate a clear direction for staff in order to accelerate progress and raise achievement. The new systems are working well and new members of the senior management team are developing their own initiatives. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are highly committed to the school and have given good support. They are keen to expand parental involvement in their children's progress. However, they are not yet fully involved in monitoring achievement, and this is recognised as an area for development. The school has evaluated its work well. It now has good capacity to make further improvements and represents good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children enter the Nursery with skills and knowledge well below those typical for their age. Good parental support helps children settle quickly, whilst well-established procedures ensure personal development is given priority. Staff work well as a team and are most caring and

dedicated. They provide an exciting, vibrant environment, which quickly encourages the children to learn through interesting, stimulating activities, both child chosen and teacher led. Excellent arrangements are in place to make children feel safe, happy and healthy.

Outstanding teaching ensures excellent progress. Currently, children are on track to leave Reception working at levels broadly in line with national expectations. Excellent assessment procedures enable staff to plan a curriculum, which meets the needs and interests of all children, encouraging their independence. The school makes excellent use of photographic evidence to support assessment and extend learning. Outdoor provision is outstanding because of the exciting, purposeful and varied activities it provides. No wonder children love coming to school when they can dig for treasure by the pirate ship, hide from the troll on the bridge, plant seeds in pots in their very own garden and make a volcano erupt!

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills across a wider range of subjects.
- Develop a more structured approach to the teaching of phonics.
- Develop governors' role in monitoring achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Overall, standards are average and achievement is good. Currently, progress in all year groups is good. The school's national assessment results have varied from average to low for several years, reflecting fluctuating numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Analysis of pupils' tracking and of their work confirms that progress has improved since September 2007 and has accelerated since January 2008. This improvement has occurred because, after a long period of instability, there is staff continuity and an established leadership team, which has successfully introduced the initiatives necessary to raise achievement. Currently, although standards reached by Year 2 pupils are improving, they are still below national averages, whilst Year 6 pupils are working at or near national expectations. There is also evidence that more pupils in Key Stage 2 are working at the higher levels. This represents good achievement for all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who achieve as well as others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are generally happy in school and enthusiastic about their learning, as their satisfactory attendance testifies. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because the school successfully promotes positive attitudes towards everyone. Behaviour is good and pupils act safely and with commendable self-control and consideration for others. They feel their teachers are caring and vigilant and have no hesitation approaching them if they feel threatened or uneasy. When asked, they stress that there is no bullying in school. They talk enthusiastically about many aspects of school life, and appreciate the range of learning opportunities the school offers. As one pupil reported, 'We can learn about Shakespeare and rocket science in the same day!' They understand the importance of healthy lifestyles, participate in many sporting and cultural events and contribute effectively to the wider community through fundraising. Pupils are gaining a good range of skills they will need as adults through electing a school council, organising their own funding for guitar lessons, and running a school magazine as a viable economic venture.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers begin their lessons promptly, using pace and variety to sustain pupils' attention. Lesson activities are often fun and pupils show real excitement. Staff use resources well and have good subject knowledge. Relationships with pupils are good and staff build successfully on previous learning, referring to this in their teaching. Staff now use more accurate assessment information to plan their lessons, but in a minority of these, activities need further refinement to challenge all abilities and provide the necessary support. Pupils work well together because they have plenty of opportunities to collaborate through discussion, drama and practical work. Analysis of pupils' books reveals strategies are consistent and work is systematically presented. Pupils are guided well to assess their work and teachers' marking is constructive. As a result pupils know what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve. When they respond to teachers' marking, they extend their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. It is enriched by visits, visitors and a good range of after-school activities. Provision for spiritual, moral and social development is good, as are programmes for personal development. Multicultural provision is more limited. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have good provision both from catch-up programmes and in-class support. English and mathematics are given appropriate priority and initiatives such as the 'Big Write' are having a beneficial impact on pupils' writing, although opportunities to develop language skills and extend their writing across the curriculum are not fully realised. Currently, the school is trialling initiatives to develop its curriculum and programmes for the systematic teaching of phonics are still in the early stages of development. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved since the last inspection. Interactive whiteboards and laptops are now being used effectively on a regular basis.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Safeguarding arrangements are securely in place and meet current requirements. Due attention is paid to health and safety arrangements, regular risk assessments and staff training. Pastoral support for all pupils is good because staff know their pupils well and react quickly and sensitively to issues as they arise. The school works closely with parents, helping them understand the value of attendance, learning, and good behaviour. It has also established effective partnerships with a wide range of outside agencies to access additional support for all its pupils, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Academic guidance is good. Teachers monitor progress in basic skills regularly and accurately and use the information gathered to develop pupils' learning. This information is also shared with pupils during lessons, and used for target setting and constructive marking. This strategy is effective. Pupils can accurately describe their performance and the features necessary for their own improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The highly committed headteacher has successfully led a new senior management team, and introduced the necessary initiatives to accelerate progress. He has been ably assisted by a very professional deputy, and hard working senior staff. As a result the school now has good capacity to make further improvements. The school is in this secure position because effective systems have been introduced to track pupils' progress accurately and to monitor teaching, learning and care so that they meet the needs of all pupils. The staff team has worked successfully with the local authority, other schools and outside agencies to improve pupils' achievement.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors have a good knowledge of the school and identify with it strongly. Governors have supported the school through a difficult period but have limited experience of monitoring pupils' achievement. They are familiar with assessment data, and by helping in school, some governors are familiar with staff, pupils and current initiatives. They also manage the school finances well to ensure good staff-pupil ratios. Some monitoring by governors has taken place, but this is not systematic enough to support the staff team as they consolidate change and seek further improvements.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| 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 | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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| 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

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|---|---|
| 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

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|--|---|
| 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? | 3 |
| 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

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| 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 | 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

27 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blackhall Colliery Primary School, Durham, TS27 4NA

Thank you for making my colleagues and me so welcome during your school's recent inspection. We were most impressed with your friendliness and behaviour. Please thank your parents for their questionnaires. Their comments were most helpful.

We are very pleased with the progress most of you have made, particularly since last September. Year 6 pupils are now on track to achieve test results in line with the national average. Blackhall Colliery Primary School is a good school. The Foundation Stage is excellent. We loved the outdoor play area and the wonderful activities the teachers organise for the younger children. I'm sure many of you older pupils remember Nursery and Reception with great affection.

Your teachers work very hard for you. Their knowledge is good and the lessons are interesting. They also take great care of you, supporting you as you learn and guiding you so that you know how to improve your work. You study some fascinating subjects and we know you appreciate lessons on health, safety and personal development. Your ICT skills have improved since the last inspection and you now have a wider range of skills. I know many of you enjoy writing, particularly 'the Big Write,' although we think that your writing could be even better if you had more chances to practise your skills. We also know how well you appreciate your after-school activities. We have found three ways in which your school could be even better. We have therefore asked your school to:

- give you more opportunities to practise your writing in other subjects, as well as in English
- look at the way it helps you to improve your reading and spelling
- work with governors so that they know how well you are achieving. They have many important decisions to make to ensure your education is good and the more knowledge they have, the better.

Thank you for your attention. Continue to enjoy your learning and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs J Elton

Lead Inspector