

# Blackmore Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114929
<b>Local Authority</b>	ESSEX LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	311762
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 March 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Godfrey Bancroft

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	150
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Mark Lambkin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Pauline Bowers
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 May 2002
<b>School address</b>	Nine Ashes Road Blackmore Ingatestone Essex CM4 0QR
<b>Telephone number</b>	01277 821528
<b>Fax number</b>	01277 821394

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school. It draws pupils from Blackmore and other nearby villages. Attainment on entry is broadly in line with that expected for four-year-olds, although there are often year-on-year variations. The percentage of pupils eligible for a free school meal is very low and the social and economic circumstances of the community are generally favourable. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is very low, with no pupils speaking English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties and those who have a statement of special educational need is also lower than found usually. The proportion of pupils who join the school at times other than expected is relatively high. The school has the Healthy Schools award and the Activemark sports award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school, giving good value for money. Response to the parents' and carers' questionnaire shows they hold the school in high regard. As one parent rightly commented, 'Blackmore provides a caring environment in which all children thrive.' This and many similar comments support the inspectors' view of a school in which pupils' well-being and academic success are at the heart of all its work. The basis for this is good leadership and management. The headteacher has brought together a dynamic and effective leadership team whose work is central to moving the school forward. They are forward thinking and always looking for ways of making the school better. Since its previous inspection, the school has made substantial improvements and addressed the issues identified at that time successfully. Based on improving standards, the good progress pupils make and the strength of the school's leadership team, its capacity for continued improvement is outstanding.

Pupils achieve well and make good progress. When they leave at the end of Year 6 standards in English and mathematics are well above average, whilst those for science are above average. The foundation for these standards is good teaching and learning and an effective curriculum. In some outstanding lessons, teachers' preparation to match work to their pupils' needs is exemplary. Lessons often proceed at a cracking pace. This enables pupils to become increasingly confident learners who enjoy school and apply themselves very well to their learning. Pupils benefit greatly from an exceptionally good range of additional activities. Participation in sport is a major strength and helps pupils to keep fit and healthy. The curriculum pays good attention to the progressive development of pupils' skills. This progression is currently in the process of being further embedded through the continued development of a themed approach to learning.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are exemplary and are based on outstanding care, guidance and support. Behaviour during lessons and around the school is excellent. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are well informed about the progress that they are making and knowledgeable about the next steps needed to improve their learning. Arrangements to ensure pupils are safe and secure are robust and observed meticulously by all staff. One pupil said, 'Everyone is kind and helpful. Bad behaviour is not an issue here.' She was by no means alone in expressing this view.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children make good progress. By the time they enter Year 1, they exceed the expected levels in all areas of their learning. The most significant progress is evident in children's personal, social and emotional development. Children play and work together well. Teaching is good and staff help children to settle in quickly. Children's abilities in language, literacy and mathematical development improve rapidly. The rate of improvement has recently increased following the introduction of a revised approach for teaching children about the sounds of letters and words. Consequently, children are becoming increasingly confident speakers. The Foundation Stage curriculum is good. Even so, there are times when children are not given sufficient guidance about the work they are doing and other occasions when their capacity to work independently is not fully exploited. The recently improved outdoor provision is used well to support children's learning. Teachers and support staff assess children's progress accurately and clearly identify the next steps in learning for each child.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Enhance the quality of provision for the Foundation Stage so that children always have enough help when they need it and sufficient opportunities to work independently when they choose.
- Fully embed curriculum developments to focus even more closely on the development of key skills through a themed approach to learning.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils, including those who sometimes find learning difficult, achieve well and make good progress. Standards have improved significantly over the last three years to the point where, by the time pupils leave, they are well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science. This is evident from the annual national tests and from data held by the school, which indicates standards are likely to be maintained at a high level for the foreseeable future. In the last two years, standards in Years 1 and 2 have also shown significant improvement, to the point where, in 2007 and for the current Year 2 pupils, they are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, there are times, as was the case in 2007, when higher attaining boys do not make the progress that might reasonably be expected. A closer focus on the learning needs of this group is successfully eradicating this situation. Pupils also achieve well in many other subjects, such as art and design and physical education.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Pupils are very polite and friendly to visitors and they have exceptionally good attitudes to learning. Attendance levels are very high and pupils' behaviour is excellent. Pupils feel free from aggressive behaviour and say there is none that they know of. Pupils have a very good understanding about how to lead a healthy lifestyle, in terms of their participation in a wide variety of physical activities and the school's promotion of healthy eating. This has culminated in the school recently gaining the Healthy Schools award. Pupils show very good understanding of how to keep safe. The school places a strong emphasis on this through the very successful personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Well-developed transition arrangements and good levels of basic skills enable pupils to prepare well for the next stage of their education.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teachers are sensitive and supportive of their pupils and this helps pupils to become increasingly confident learners. Teaching is often exciting, vibrant and challenging, and sometimes excellent. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils. They usually plan their lessons well, meeting the needs of the majority of pupils effectively. Just occasionally, the very detailed planning of what pupils are expected to learn does not manifest itself in practice. At such times, pupils of differing abilities find themselves doing the same work, which reduces their rate of progress. Pupils are often enthusiastic learners because lessons are interesting and exciting. Teachers make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support pupils' learning.

They are also good at making sure pupils are clear about what they are expected to learn. This helps pupils to understand how well they are progressing. They are very knowledgeable about what they need to do to make their work even better. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to the progress of all pupils, but particularly to the progress of those who sometimes find learning hard.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is broad, balanced and interesting. There is a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy so that pupils' progress in these subjects is good. The curriculum is organised well so that pupils at all ages, in single and mixed-age classes, experience a structured development of skills, knowledge and understanding. Even so, this progression is currently being further refined through the development of a themed approach to learning. A very good range of visits and visitors adds interest to pupils' learning. In addition, activity days and weeks such as 'India Day' and 'World Book Day' are much enjoyed by pupils and make a strong contribution to their cultural awareness and enjoyment. Large numbers of pupils attend the interesting range of clubs, which support learning well.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The school has rigorous procedures to ensure the health, safety and well-being of all pupils. Arrangements for risk assessments, health and safety and safeguarding pupils are fully in place and ensure that all the school does is safe. The school has developed exceptionally strong links with a variety of agencies to ensure that pupils make good progress, including those who benefit from opportunities to develop their special skills or talents. A very strong support structure is in place for pupils who find learning more difficult. They are very competently supported by teachers and teaching assistants, enabling these pupils to make good progress. Academic support and guidance are of an extremely high standard. Tracking systems and target setting are exceptionally well developed. Pupils are fully aware of their targets and know how well they are doing through self and peer assessment and the clear advice given in the marking of their work.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Arrangements to evaluate the school's performance and to plan for improvements are excellent and staff and governors all play their part. Planning is clearly focused on ensuring that pupils can do their best. For instance, good leadership and management have enabled staff to successfully introduce and apply the principles of the revised national strategies for literacy and numeracy to further improve the rate of pupils' progress. Suitably challenging targets are set each year for pupils' attainment.

Governance is outstanding. Governors are very supportive and are well-informed about the work of the school. Their role as 'critical friend' to the headteacher is very effective and governors are well placed to hold the school to account. The management of the school's finances is efficient and resources are used wisely. For example, governors have allocated

funding to ensuring that the buildings are kept in good repair and that staffing levels can be maintained.

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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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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	1
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	2

### 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?	1

<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>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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	1
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**

20 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blackmore Primary School, Ingatestone, Essex CM4 0QR

Thank you all for making Mr Speakman and me so very welcome when we visited recently to carry out your school's inspection. It was a great pleasure to talk with you and see your enjoyment of school and enthusiasm for learning.

Yours is undoubtedly a good school. I know that you and your parents and carers think so too. Your teachers and other staff do a really good job in making sure you can always do your best. They are also doing an excellent job at taking care of you and making sure you are safe. For your part, you behave exceptionally well and work very hard. Well done! We are very impressed by how knowledgeable you are about the progress you are making and about how to make your work even better.

We feel that Mrs Bowers and the staff are very well placed to make the school even better. This is something they are always trying to do. With this in mind, we have asked them to consider doing the following things.

- Make sure that the youngest children always have enough help when they need it and even more opportunities to work on their own when they choose.
- Check that you are all able to practise and use your skills, such as reading and writing, during all your other work.

We wish you well in your future education. We are confident that if you keep on working as hard as you do now that you will be very successful.

Yours sincerely,

Godfrey Bancroft

Lead inspector