

Blakeney Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115502
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	311953
Inspection date	21 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Julia Coop

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	82
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gary Coleman-Wood
Headteacher	Brett Stevenson
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2004
School address	High Street Blakeney GL15 4EB
Telephone number	01594 510270
Fax number	01594 510380

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

This inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

The success of initiatives to raise standards and increase the rate of progress across the school, especially in developing writing skills and increasing the attainment of girls.

The effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels in promoting consistently good or better teaching and improving the quality of provision.

How well pupils are involved in evaluating their own learning to aid better achievement.

Evidence was gathered from visits to lessons, sampling pupils' work, discussions with pupils, parents, staff and governors and from the school's documentation and assessment information. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than most. The vast majority of pupils are from White British families. The very small proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are new to speaking English. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average and very high in some year groups. Until September 2007, teaching space was restricted and the school hall was used as a classroom for most of the day. Improvements to the accommodation mean that there are now four classrooms. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 are taught in three mixed-age classes. There is separate accommodation for reception age children. The headteacher has a considerable teaching commitment each week. The school has been awarded Healthy School status.

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 and rapidly improving school. Since the appointment of the headteacher, the school has gone from strength to strength. Parents comment that they are delighted with the changes and are fulsome in their praise for this 'friendly, very caring school'. The headteacher took swift action to strengthen the quality of teaching and learning so that underachievement has been tackled successfully. All staff have willingly embraced the changes and have relished the opportunities provided for them to work in different year groups. They have successfully risen to this challenge and as a result, the quality of teaching has improved and is now good. Together with an interesting and effective curriculum, pupils have made up for lost ground and are making good progress. They are achieving well in relation to their starting points and individual capabilities. This success is, in part, also due to the much improved accommodation which is now providing an environment that inspires the pupils to learn. They love the revitalised school hall and classrooms, are very proud of their new desks with 'lift up lids' and the newly refurbished outside spaces. Without exception, they comment that they 'love coming to school each day'. Consequently, attendance is good.

The extended accommodation has also meant that this year, for the first time, children in Reception do not have to share a room with older pupils. Their new room and outdoor space gives them the opportunity to learn through a wide variety of practical experiences, which ensures they make good progress from a below average start. In this small school, standards vary each year; this is due to small numbers and the varying proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and more complex disabilities in each year group. However, there has been a rising trend in the pupils' level of achievement, which has continued this year. This inspection confirms that current standards are average at the end of Year 6, but more pupils are reaching the expected Level 4 and higher Level 5 than in previous years. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or more complex disabilities also make good progress because of well thought out provision. In addition, pupils new to English are successfully helped to learn.

Unusually, over the past three years, there has been a trend indicating that the girls do not do as well as girls nationally, or as well as the boys in the school, especially in English. This year, evidence shows that there is no difference in their level of attainment in either Year 2 or Year 6, although the school is correctly keeping a close eye on this situation. However, despite this positive and improving picture, across the school standards in writing are a little lower than in other subjects. Many pupils do not have confidence when spelling and they still have gaps in their knowledge of different spelling strategies. Their work shows that they make basic errors and this restricts the overall quality of their writing. In addition, many pupils find it difficult to express themselves when speaking. This has a knock on effect of restricting the range of vocabulary they use when writing.

Pupils are provided with a good range of opportunities to write in a variety of situations in other subjects and this is aiding improvement in this important basic skill. However, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to practise their speaking skills in other subjects or through drama, for example. However, despite this, the revitalised curriculum is a particularly impressive feature of the school. Themes make learning relevant for the pupils, whilst innovative opportunities, such as to learn circus skills or participate in making animated films, excite and challenge the pupils, so much so, that a trapeze club is now an established feature. As a result, older pupils confidently perform on the trapeze, and enjoy this form of exercise, which builds their upper body strength. In addition, there is a huge array of trips, such as to visit the Houses

of Parliament, or visits to theatres and museums that successfully extend the pupils horizons beyond the Forest of Dean and which make a good contribution to their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. The school allotment is also a popular venture. This means that pupils are well aware of the need to eat 'five a day' and because they have grown their own fruit and vegetables, they are more willing to try this healthy produce when it is used for school dinners. There is a good community spirit and pupils show kindness towards others who are less fortunate than themselves. Their behaviour is good and older pupils look out for younger pupils, helping them at lunchtime and in the playground. Although they admit there can be a 'little bit of unkind behaviour at times', they are confident about how to keep safe, for example, by telling a teacher or saying 'no'. The school council is proactive and pupils readily make important decisions, such as fund-raising and designing a memorial garden. As a result, pupils become confident and self-assured young people who are ready to face the challenges when they move to a larger secondary school.

Parents are impressed with the way that the school 'really cares for their children', and 'helps families who may be experiencing difficulties'. The school is a safe place and it works very well with a range of outside agencies to support the emotional health of pupils who may be troubled and those with more complex learning needs or disabilities. All pupils are valued as individuals and the school goes out of its way to welcome and include all pupils whatever their difficulties. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good because of the very good pastoral care, support and guidance that they receive. However, pupils' academic guidance is not quite as strong. Pupils have individual learning targets and value opportunities to talk to their teachers or mark each other's work to a set of criteria. Teachers also mark pupils' work regularly, but the quality of marking is not consistent. Where marking is good, it is simple enough for the pupils to read, and indicates what they have done well and what they need to improve. However, some pupils comment that 'they can't read or understand their teacher's comments'. In addition, individual targets are not always fully understood by the pupils. As a result, the current marking and target setting systems do not always contribute effectively to pupils' understanding of their own learning to aid their achievement.

The school thoroughly deserves its improved reputation within the community. Leadership and management are good and despite having a significant teaching commitment, the headteacher has worked with great determination to set in place effective monitoring systems with which to accurately evaluate the school. The assessment and tracking system is first rate. It provides a wealth of information, which is used well to refine teachers' planning and set challenging individual and school targets. As a result, teaching activities are carefully matched to meet the different ages and abilities in the mixed age classes. This, in turn, is ensuring pupils are making much better progress than they were previously. The headteacher has been tireless in his pursuit of improvements and he has been well supported by the governors, the small team of staff and the senior teacher. Together they form an effective team who have developed their skills well. Subject leaders monitor pupils' work and undertake shared moderation exercises, but much of the formal monitoring of teaching and learning has fallen on the headteacher's shoulders. However, with the building work completed, and the school in a more settled situation, they recognise that the time is now ripe for the subject leaders to become even more formally involved in monitoring activities to further aid school improvement. There is a positive atmosphere around the school and initiatives already established have resulted in marked improvements. Pupils agree that they are 'learning much more now' and 'teachers are kind and helpful'. This shows that the school is in a good position to continue to move forward.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The children love their new classroom and delight in the improved outdoor space where they learn and play well. They work well together, sharing the equipment sensibly. They concentrate hard when working as a class and think carefully about their feelings, making sad and happy faces in their mirrors. The fact that the children are settled and making good progress is due to the good teaching and warm supportive relationships. Planning is detailed, which ensures that the children have a wide variety of opportunities to learn in a practical way. There is a good balance between adult-led and child-selected activities, but there is room to guide and challenge the children a little more when they choose their own activities. However, staff work well as a team and interact purposely in the children's learning. Consequently, this year, children are in line to reach the standards expected for children of this age when they start in Year 1, except in their speaking skills, which are not quite as well developed. The provision is led and managed successfully by the Key Stage 1 leader. She supports the reception staff well. Regular meetings ensure that the provision has developed well, although she has not yet formally monitored teaching and learning. Close links with parents and the playgroup ensure that children settle quickly into the routines and parents comment that they are very pleased with the way that their children have blossomed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' spelling and enhance pupils' speaking skills to aid better writing.
- Ensure that subject leaders become more involved in monitoring to aid school improvement.
- Improve the quality of marking and individual learning targets to enhance pupils' knowledge of their own learning.

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?	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	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?	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

22 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blakeney Primary School, Blakeney, GL15 4EB

Thank you very much for being so nice to me when I visited. I really enjoyed the chance to hear about all the exciting activities that you have done and to see your new desks and lovely outside areas. The most important thing to say is that you go to a good school and I agree with you that it is a friendly, happy place.

Here are some of the best things I liked about your school.

- You behave well and you are friendly and helpful.
- You make good progress because you are taught well and you work hard.
- I was delighted that you eat lots of healthy fruit and vegetables that you have grown in your allotment.
- You all get off to a good start in Reception and the new classroom is lovely.
- The staff make sure that you have lots of fun activities that help you learn.
- Everyone takes good care of you so you are happy and safe in school.
- The headteacher and staff are working hard to make your school an even better place to learn.

What I have asked the school to do now to make things even better.

- Make sure that you are helped to improve your spelling and given lots of different opportunities to help you improve your speaking skills.
- Make sure that all staff keep an eye on how well you are doing in lessons so that it can become an even better school.
- Make sure that you know exactly what you need to do to improve your work.

You are very lucky to attend such a caring, happy school and I hope you go on trying hard and enjoying all of the interesting activities which help you learn.

Julia Coop Lead inspector