

Blackfield Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116485
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	312334
Inspection dates	7–8 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Peter Thrussell

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	495
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	55
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr L Clark
Headteacher	Mrs C Lowe
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hampton Lane Blackfield Southampton SO45 1XA
Telephone number	02380 893132
Fax number	02380 897945

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Blackfield is a much larger than average school. It is now in its third year as an all through primary school. Additional pupils join the school in Year 3 from a federated infant school. The headteacher has only recently joined the school. The great majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is just above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. These pupils have a variety of needs including moderate learning, and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school has an Activemark and silver ECO schools awards and Healthy Schools status. There is on-site pre-school provision run by an independent provider.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Blackfield Primary is a good school. The new headteacher has quickly identified the strengths of the school and started to identify where further improvements are required. The leadership team has been restructured and is united in its desire to support these improvements. Parents are very supportive of the school's work and are already appreciating the closer links being established. One commented, 'The weekly newsletter, instigated by the new headteacher, has really improved home/school communication.'

The school has a caring ethos, which fully supports pupils' good academic and personal development. Pupils enjoy school, especially residential trips and the very wide range of popular clubs and sporting opportunities available to them, celebrated in their frequent success in local sporting events. Their behaviour is excellent. They have very good attitudes to learning, settling quickly to lessons, and are generally very attentive. Consequently, they achieve well. From below average starting points in Reception, by the end of Year 6 pupils attain above average standards in English and science, and well above average standards in mathematics. However, there is some inconsistency in the progress made by pupils across the school, particularly in Key Stage 1 where, overall, progress is satisfactory. Pupils make outstanding progress in Year 6 because expectations are very high and the work is very challenging.

Subject leaders track pupils' progress very carefully, identifying where pupils are not doing as well as expected and providing additional support. Throughout the year, pupils of different abilities also benefit from well focused teaching provided by the English and mathematics leaders. Along with improved planning in both subjects, this is helping to accelerate progress. In English, weaknesses in writing were identified, especially in Key Stage 1 where standards are below average. The school has introduced a structured approach to teaching sounds and letters and more familiarity with the content of well-known stories is being encouraged. This is helping younger pupils with their spelling and ideas for writing, and is just starting to have an impact on their progress. In mathematics, rates of progress have been improved considerably through an emphasis on practical tasks and problem solving. These actions, along with staff training, are bringing about improvements. However, they are not yet being monitored sufficiently through regular lesson observations. As a result, progress remains variable and although the quality of teaching and learning is good overall, there is some inconsistency.

Given the school's determination for further improvement, and the ongoing success of recent actions, it has a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in Reception get a good start to school and achieve well, particularly in language and mathematical development. By the end of the year, most are achieving the learning goals expected of them from starting points below those expected for their ages. They settle happily into school because of good links with the on-site pre-school, other nurseries, parents, and a strong nurturing environment. Good parental relationships are maintained through newsletters and school visits. The Early Years Foundation Stage is managed well and clear priorities are set for development. Improvements in the way that letters and sounds are learnt can be seen in children's more rapid progress in acquiring reading and writing skills. Adults work together as effective teams. They have high expectations of behaviour and relationships are excellent.

Consequently children's personal development is good. In particular they work well independently, take turns and have a good understanding of classroom routines. Teaching and learning are good. Stimulating and interesting activities are provided, and there is a good mix of teacher directed and child initiated activities. Children benefit from a stimulating environment both indoors and outdoors, where there is an extensive cover so that children can be outside whatever the weather. Good use is made of assessment to provide children with further support if necessary. Children are well cared for and good support is provided for children who are having difficulty managing their behaviour and emotions.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards in writing, particularly at Key Stage 1.
- Monitor lessons more rigorously to identify and eradicate inconsistencies in teaching.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well overall and standards by the end of Year 6 are above average. They make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and, by the end of Year 2, although standards are broadly average in reading and mathematics, they are below average in writing. Progress accelerates in Key Stage 2, and is outstanding in Year 6. This is due to extremely well focused learning opportunities, which are aimed successfully at enabling pupils to reach their challenging end-of-year targets. Pupils are also fully involved in the evaluation of their own work. Consequently, they know precisely what they are aiming for and how to make further improvements. Leaders have identified where further action is required to accelerate progress, particularly in Key Stage 1. This is proving to be effective, particularly in mathematics and in pupils' knowledge of sounds and letters. Good provision for pupils with learning difficulties ensures that they make similar progress to others. Very careful monitoring of progress ensures that boys and girls achieve equally well. Good induction procedures for those joining the school in Year 3 from other local infant schools ensure that they also make similar progress to others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in their spiritual, moral and social development. Relationships are excellent and pupils are kind and courteous to one another. Despite having very positive attitudes to learning, the school recognises that there is more to be done to develop pupils' skills as independent learners. Pupils enjoy school although attendance is just below average, despite the school's efforts to improve this. Contributory factors are the holiday arrangements at local places of work. Pupils know what constitutes a balanced diet and are keen to keep fit. They have a good understanding of how to keep safe and are fully involved in writing their own class rules. Pupils take an active role in the life of the school. They take their responsibilities as school council members and as eco warriors seriously. The school council has been involved in developing the school garden and providing more stimulating wet playtime activities. Older pupils work well with younger ones by organising their play equipment. Pupils contribute to the local and wider community, for example, by organising fund raising for charities. By the time pupils leave the school, they have the necessary skills to be successful young citizens, ready to take full advantage of the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers establish good relationships with pupils. This helps to create a pleasant learning environment. Pupils are managed well and they work hard. Teachers use information and communication technology well to introduce lessons and engage pupils' interest. English and mathematics leaders withdraw pupils from class lessons for very well focussed learning activities. This means that classes are often reduced in size to aid learning. This was seen in an outstanding mathematics lesson in Year 6, where more able pupils were challenged with Pythagoras' theorem, so extending their use of squares and square roots. In these classes, there are good examples of the use of assessment to plan work that matches pupils' differing needs. However, this practice is better in some classes than others.

A clear structure in planning enables specific subject skills to be well taught. However, at times this restricts the opportunities pupils have to discuss what they are doing and to work independently. The marking of pupils' work tells them what they have done well. It does not always show pupils how to improve and move their learning forward.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a very interesting and enjoyable range of activities for pupils. They benefit from residential visits in Years 3 to 6 and visitors, such as the one who shared his first hand experience in World War II. Year 5, when researching their topic on persecution, established good e-mail links with the Anne Franck Museum in Amsterdam. A well-planned personal development programme effectively supports pupils' personal development and well-being. Subjects are sometimes linked together creatively in themes to make learning more real and purposeful. The school has identified that it needs to develop this approach further, so that pupils have more opportunities to use and develop their different skills and to work independently. Although there are opportunities for pupils to write in other subjects, there is not always sufficient challenge in the writing tasks. Strong links with local schools enhance curriculum provision and development well. Gifted and talented pupils benefit from additional extension activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

A caring atmosphere makes a strong contribution to the pupils' enjoyment of school. Staff have positive relationships with pupils, which helps them grow in confidence. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties and other vulnerable pupils are well supported by the school, often in good partnership with outside agencies such as home link workers. As a result, these pupils achieve well. Specialist emotional literacy staff provide particularly good support for the emotional, behavioural and social needs of vulnerable pupils. Procedures for safeguarding pupils have recently been revised and are now securely in place. Overall, the school promotes pupils' health and safety well. Although risks to pupils are assessed adequately, the school misses the opportunity to involve pupils and teachers in this process. Teachers generally give pupils helpful information on their progress and to guide them in their learning. However, this is inconsistent, being very effective with the oldest pupils and less so with other year groups.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

School leaders successfully provide pupils with a good education within a very caring environment. The new headteacher has accurately identified improvement areas for the school and has begun to write suitable action plans to address them. School leaders have provided generous staffing levels in those year groups where greater progress is sought. English and mathematics leaders, too, have identified areas for improvement and taken extensive action. For example, they have revised the curriculum, provided staff training and introduced a range of initiatives that have skilfully targeted groups of pupils for extra support. As a result, pupils generally make good progress and, for those in Year 6, it is outstanding. School leaders have rightly identified the need to ensure that pupils' progress is consistently good across all classes. However, monitoring has not been sufficiently rigorous to produce a greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning, to ensure this level of progress. The special educational needs coordinators manage the provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties well, and ensure that vulnerable pupils are well supported. Governors are well involved in the school. They are robust in their monitoring of the school's performance and hold the school to account for it. Strong links with the local and wider communities help pupils to gain a good awareness of different ways of life and cultures.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

21 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blackfield Primary School, Southampton, SO45 1XA

I am writing to let you know what we found when we visited your school. Thank you for taking part in the inspection. We spoke with some of you during our visit and you were always interesting to talk to, very polite and helpful. You spoke very enthusiastically about enjoying school and all of the things in which you take part. Blackfield Primary is a good school.

We liked these things the most.

- Children get a good start to school in Reception.
- You work hard in your lessons and your behaviour is excellent. Those of you in Year 6 do particularly well.
- The school makes sure that you are safe and well looked after.
- Pupils who find learning difficult are well supported.
- You enjoy school and are all keen to keep fit and eat the right things.
- You go on residential trips and have many school clubs.
- You are particularly good at sport.
- You are keen to take on responsibilities.
- Your new headteacher and other leaders are doing a good job.

We have asked the school to work on the following things now.

- Although most of you do well in your writing, standards could be even higher, especially in Years 1 and 2. The school has plans to improve writing and must make sure that they are working well.
- The school must check that all of your lessons help you to make the best progress possible. You can help by making sure that you all continue to work hard, but do not forget to enjoy your time in school.

We did enjoy visiting your school and watching you learn.

Yours sincerely

Peter Thrussell

Lead Inspector