

Blakedown CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116784
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	312401
Inspection date	27 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Ken Buxton HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	112
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Gardiner
Headteacher	Hilary Pritchard
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2004
School address	Birmingham Road Blakedown Kidderminster DY10 3JN
Telephone number	01562 700243
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized school serving the local communities of Blakedown and Chaddesley, just to the north east of Kidderminster. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is much lower than in most schools. Most are from White British backgrounds and almost all have English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Award, the Eco Schools Green Flag Award and the Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Blakedown Primary School is a good school with some outstanding features. The headteacher is very well respected for all the changes and improvements that have taken place since the last inspection. As a result, the vast majority of parents hold the headteacher and school in very high regard and their comments capture its key qualities. Typical comments include, 'The school is working wonders with my child,' and 'We really appreciate the way the school strives to help each of our children reach their potential.'

Children get off to a good start when they join the Reception Year. Parents are delighted with how well their children settle quickly and begin to make good progress. By the time they reach the end of Year 2, pupils have continued to do well and attain standards above those expected nationally. Since the introduction of Year 6 pupils to the school in 2005, the Key Stage 2 results have broadly matched the national average, but the school's tracking data shows that the current year group are well on track to achieve higher standards this year. This is because teaching is consistently good. However, the marking of pupils' work is not sharp enough to help pupils understand better how they can improve their work. The recent changes to the curriculum have excited and motivated the pupils because it now helps them apply their learning to real-life contexts. The school has yet to monitor and evaluate the impact of this major change on pupils' attainment, although the early indications are positive.

Pupils clearly enjoy coming to school to learn and, because of the school's efforts, their attendance is good. Their personal development is good overall; behaviour is excellent and pupils are alert to the need to stay fit and healthy by eating sensibly and being active. Pupils feel safe at school because of the good supervision levels throughout the school. They participate actively in the local community and benefit from excellent opportunities to raise funds for charities and the school. Their spiritual and cultural development is good, being underpinned by the close links with the local church and regular visits to other faiths' centres of worship. The school's creative ideas and initiatives have had a dramatic impact on pupils' moral and social development, which is excellent.

The quality and the effectiveness of the school's leadership and management are good. Working together, the headteacher, staff and governors display a good capacity to bring about further improvements because they have rigorous systems for checking on how well the school is doing; these have resulted in correctly identifying areas for improvement, as shown in the school's improvement plan, and having the determination to bring them to fruition. However, although the plan is detailed, the targets used to monitor progress do not focus sufficiently on improving pupils' attainment.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. This is because it is well led and managed and the children make good progress. The children enter the Reception Year with similar skills to those expected nationally. They make good progress because of the rewarding and enjoyable experiences planned for them. Good teaching helps them to make especially good progress with their reading, writing and speaking skills. There is a good balance between teacher-directed and child-selected activities. Their good personal, social and emotional development ensures that they know right from wrong and behave well in lessons and at playtimes. They work well

together, cooperating and sharing successfully. For example, while involved in water play, the children demonstrated that they were confident in planning and carrying out their own experimental activities, enabling them to learn more about the practical properties of water. The teachers' assessments build a clear picture of each child as a learner. This is because they have gained experience with moderating their assessments and are now more confident to make judgements about each child's development. This in turn helps with making secure judgements about children's attainment on entry. The school's leadership are now looking to provide a wider range of outdoor toys to improve further the children's personal and physical development.

What the school should do to improve further

- monitor and evaluate the impact of the revised curriculum on pupils' progress
- improve teachers' marking to assess pupils' work more accurately and identify their next steps in learning
- sharpen the school improvement plan's success criteria so that they focus on raising pupils' attainment, can be used to evaluate progress, and contribute to the school achieving its academic targets

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Over recent years, children have started school with skills and abilities that are broadly at the expected level for their age. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage so that by the time they start Year 1, standards are above average for this age group. This good progress continues through Key Stage 1 so that by the end of Year 2, pupils are consistently achieving standards above the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. In the three years following the school's redesignation as a primary school, the Key Stage 2 results have fluctuated but have been close to the national average overall. Taking into account their starting points, the 2007 Year 6 pupils made satisfactory progress across Key Stage 2. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities made good progress and achieved standards above those of similar pupils nationally. However, there is now strong evidence that Key Stage 2 pupils are attaining higher standards and that they are making good progress. This is because the school has redesigned the curriculum to meet pupils' needs and interests better. This change has motivated the pupils to want to learn and take greater personal responsibility for their own education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have a very clear understanding of what is right and wrong. They have developed a very strong social commitment, in particular about the need to take great care of the environment and the world in which we live. To demonstrate their commitment and involvement to the local community, pupils are actively involved as Eco Warriors and participate in numerous exciting activities to improve the environment. Past initiatives have included tree planting, composting and developing a school travel plan; one of the most recent initiatives is to encourage the recycling of telephone directories. As one parent explained, trying to encapsulate the excitement and longevity of this project 'After two years, I am still waiting for the novelty of being an Eco Warrior to wear off.' In addition, the school council is also very active, meeting regularly to develop new ideas, which can be put into practice to improve life both at the school and within

the community. Their successes have included planning activities and raising funds for the church and purchasing new playground equipment. This equipment is used regularly, as pupils have a good awareness of the need to keep fit and healthy through frequent exercise and sensible eating.

Although a very few parents raised concerns about pupils' behaviour, the inspectors agree with the school that pupils behave exceptionally well. This is because the school provides pupils with good strategies to manage incidents of inappropriate behaviour. The appointment of pupils as Playground Buddies who promote positive play and appropriate behaviour is just one example of how the school has responded successfully to help pupils work and live together successfully. This also demonstrates the school's strong and determined focus on caring for its pupils. As a result, pupils feel safe and gain a great deal of enjoyment from school. This, in turn, has helped to improve levels of attendance, which are now good. Overall, pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education, both academically and through the opportunities they have had to learn about the value of money.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils show good attitudes to work, and relationships are good. Importantly, teachers are increasingly making lessons fun because they are focusing the learning opportunities on activities that capture pupils' imagination and excitement. This was particularly evident as Years 5 and 6 pupils worked together planning an exciting ending for their stories.

Teachers are becoming increasingly confident in making good and effective use of information and communication technology in lessons to make learning more relevant and interesting. Teaching assistants contribute well to the effectiveness of lessons by providing pupils with good quality support. Teachers brief them well beforehand and deploy them appropriately to guide individuals and small groups of pupils. This good quality teamworking ensures that pupils make good progress during lessons. However, despite these good features, teachers' expectations about the quality of pupils' work are not always made clear enough; this results in some work being poorly presented and the inclusion of avoidable mistakes. In addition, teachers' marking does not regularly provide pupils with sufficient detail about how much progress they have made towards meeting the lesson's objectives and it does not set out clearly enough the next steps needed by pupils of differing ability in order to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Since the last inspection, the staff have developed an exciting curriculum based on pupils' interests and needs. It includes the Learning for Life Academy, which began in September 2007. This initiative involves running a short course each half-term on a specific theme, such as film-making or architecture. Its particular strengths are that it not only meets the needs of the pupils very well but it also links the learning in different subjects together, helping to make lessons more relevant and coherent. The immediate impact of this change has been that pupils are excited by the different courses and, as a result, are following up activities at home with additional research work and extension activities. Because this development is still in its early stages, the school has yet to fully evaluate its impact on pupils' attainment, although it has already recognised that some content, particularly for the younger pupils, is not yet always

fully appropriate for their age and experience. The curriculum is enriched and enlivened by a good range of clubs and activities that extend pupils' learning experiences well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The staff know the pupils very well and take good care to ensure that they feel safe and secure. This is because there is a consistent approach and a close attention to detail from all the staff. As a result, pupils feel valued; this ensures that if they have any concerns, they know they can talk in confidence to any adult. Good attention is paid to carrying out risk assessments and to ensuring that all security and child protection procedures have been completed with due care and diligence. Good arrangements for first aid are in place and the school works very closely with the different support agencies to ensure that pupils' individual needs are met successfully. The school sets pupils appropriately challenging academic targets and monitors their progress carefully.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school and its future development. This has been gained from working closely with subject leaders and governors to monitor the school's performance, which has helped to identify the school's strengths and improvement priorities. Her lead provides a focus that inspires confidence within all members of the community, who hold her in very high regard. She receives good support from her colleagues with leadership responsibilities. The subject leaders, some of whom are relatively new to the school, are already developing a good understanding of standards and achievement in their specific areas of responsibility. They have each contributed well to the school's overall development by analysing assessment data to identify areas in need of improvement. Governors have a good understanding of their role and responsibilities. They hold the school to account well and ensure that it obtains good value for money. They are informed and knowledgeable about the school's work and, as a result, they have a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development. They make a significant contribution to the school's development through the creation and implementation of the improvement plan. The plan is appropriate in many ways but it does not state clearly enough how current improvement priorities are intended to raise standards.

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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	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?	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	1
The attendance of learners	2
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 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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blakedown C of E Primary School, Kidderminster DY10 3JN

Thank you very much for making us so welcome and helping us to find out about life at Blakedown C of E Primary School. We really enjoyed talking with you in lessons, at lunchtime, in the playground and during our meetings with the school council and the Eco committee. Thank you also for the letter we received from a member of the Eco committee who was too ill to attend school during our inspection. You all told us how much you like your school and we can see why.

Blakedown is a good school, and these are the best things about it

- the headteacher and staff know you very well and take good care of you
- the progress you make is good
- you enjoy your lessons, particularly the Learning for Life Academy activities
- you behave exceptionally well and have good manners
- you like the range of clubs that the school offers
- the Eco Warriors are highly committed to improving the environment
- you know how to stay safe and lead a healthy life

These are the things that we think the school can improve

- ensure that the changes to the curriculum enable you to continue making good progress
- ensure that the marking of your work helps you know what to do next and that teachers plan new work more accurately to your individual needs
- make sure that the school's improvement plan includes clear targets that focus on helping you to achieve high standards.

Thank you once again, and don't forget to do your best at all times.

Ken Buxton Her Majesty's Inspector

28 February 2008

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