

The Bluecoat School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120399
Local Authority	LINCOLNSHIRE LA
Inspection number	313605
Inspection dates	31 October –1 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Geof Timms

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev R Mackrill
Headteacher	Mr T Howley
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2005
School address	Green Lane Stamford Lincolnshire PE9 1HE
Telephone number	01780 764202
Fax number	01780 481311

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school, which serves an area to the northeast of Stamford. An above average proportion of the pupils is entitled to free school meals. There is a high number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and an above average proportion have statements of special educational need entitling them to extra support. Although there is a range of attainment on entry to the school, a significant proportion has skills that are well below those expected for their ages. Almost all pupils are from a White British heritage, and none has English as an additional language.

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, very inclusive and exceptionally caring school. It has a number of important strengths that are recognised by parents, and by the pupils who say how happy they are to be at school. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well provided for and helped to take a full part in school life. The staff benefit from excellent liaison with a wide range of outside agencies, this helps provide appropriate support for children and their families, and good value for money. Parents' views are summed up by one who wrote that leaving her child at the school was like 'leaving her with a member of your family'.

From their often very low starting points, pupils make good progress and achieve well. This starts with the outstanding provision in the Foundation Stage, which gives the children an excellent start to their schooling. The school has taken advantage of a wide range of external support and initiatives to help them raise standards, and levels of attainment have steadily improved over the last five years. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 are rising consistently each year. Standards by Year 6 are broadly average. In mathematics and science they have risen sharply. However, standards in English, and especially in writing, are more inconsistent and this is an urgent area for improvement. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to write at length in different subjects. Most pupils are learning basic information and communication technology (ICT) skills but they have insufficient opportunities to use these skills on a regular basis across a range of subjects. Past weaknesses in the standards achieved by boys have been addressed by improved provision of more appropriate resources and teaching styles, and boys now make progress that matches that of the girls. The good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities helps many of these pupils make better progress than similar pupils nationally.

The good progress made by pupils is largely due to good effective teaching, which is focused on basic skills and on providing a broad, enriched and interesting curriculum. All adults build very effective relationships with the pupils. This encourages good personal development, good attitudes towards school and good behaviour. Pupils are given a wide range of responsibilities and, especially through the peer mediation scheme, they make a good contribution to their community. They are developing satisfactory but improving basic skills, and that is helping prepare them for the future. Arrangements for personal, social, health and citizenship education work well. Consequently, pupils have a good understanding of safe and healthy lifestyles.

The adults in the school form a very effective, close and mutually supportive team and they work very hard for the benefit of the pupils. This is evident in the excellent care, the detailed tracking and assessments made, and the high level of personal and academic guidance provided for pupils. The school is well led and managed by the headteacher, senior management team and governing body. Their strengths are shown in their desire to do the best for the pupils and their willingness to seek out and accept any help and guidance available. The subject leaders have improved their monitoring and evaluation since the previous inspection, but they do not yet use this information sufficiently to spread good practice or to help colleagues develop and improve their knowledge and skills. The improvements made since the last inspection, alongside the accurate and honest self-evaluation show that the school has a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Since the previous inspection, the very strong practice evident in the nursery class has been built on and extended to the reception class, and there is now outstanding practice throughout the Foundation Stage. This is helped by the school's flexible admission arrangements in the Nursery. The outstanding provision is also due to the excellent leadership and management skills demonstrated by the deputy headteacher, and the superb support she receives from the very effective and skilled staff team. The school has developed the accommodation well and the outside area, in particular, is an excellent resource for developing all areas of learning. The focus is on helping children develop their personal and social skills. The school also works very hard to build on the children's low communication, language and number skills to ensure that much good progress is made. The recent introduction of the children's centre attached to the school offers clear opportunities for further close links with families and children, which the school plans to use to help raise standards further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by making sure pupils have every opportunity to develop their skills in all subjects.
- Ensure sufficient opportunities for pupils to use ICT as a regular part of their learning.
- Give all staff with leadership responsibilities opportunities to identify and spread good practice.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

A growing proportion of the children have specific speech and language difficulties when they start school. Many have underdeveloped attitudes towards working and playing with others and the school works hard and largely successfully to raise these low levels to an adequate standard. In Years 1 and 2, pupils make good progress and standards have consistently improved over the past five years. Although they remain below average in reading, writing and mathematics, this represents good achievement from their low starting points.

In Years 3 to 6, the good progress continues, as does the picture of rising standards in mathematics and science. By the end of Year 6, standards are currently broadly average and this represents good achievement in these subjects. However, standards in English have been falling and improving the quality of pupils' writing is a priority. They do not have sufficient opportunities to write in other subjects, styles or genres. A recently implemented scheme to improve reading and spelling is already having an impact as reported by some parents, although it is too soon to show in any test data. The school gives the arts subjects a high priority and this is reflected in some excellent work in art and design, and good standards are evident in dance, religious education, physical education and history. Basic ICT skills are satisfactory but pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use these skills across the curriculum.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Staff work hard to help pupils develop into effective learners, good citizens and caring people. The good levels of enjoyment are evident in all aspects of the school's work and pupils are largely polite, cheerful and friendly as they go through the day. There are some good

opportunities for them to work together cooperatively and collaboratively. They behave well in and out of lessons, and they say that when bullying or poor behaviour occurs it is well dealt with, especially through the peer mediation scheme. The school develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well. Attendance is above average and the school works hard with families to achieve this.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good teaching is evident in the good progress made by most pupils. However, there are inconsistencies in the teaching so that some of the outstanding qualities evident are not reflected in the satisfactory lessons. The teachers are very well supported by a wide range of support staff whose work has a clearly beneficial impact on learning, especially for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Relationships between adults and pupils are very strong and this encourages full participation in activities. Lessons are well planned. Pupils themselves say they enjoy lessons, especially those that contain practical activities. Teachers' use of technology in their teaching is growing and at times the use of the interactive whiteboards clearly added to pupils' understanding. Displays are used well to provide pupils with information and as part of ongoing learning. However, there are few examples of good quality pupils' written work to act as models and examples for others.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Recent initiatives to link subjects are beginning to improve provision for literacy, although these have yet to impact on overall standards. Staff modify the curriculum effectively to ensure that pupils of all abilities have equal opportunities to succeed. They also make good use of work in art, music and dance to enrich pupils' learning experience in other subjects, and to build their confidence and self-esteem. This, along with a wealth of exciting, first-hand experiences, such as residential visits, trips to the British Museum and working alongside artists, brings school work to life and promotes enjoyment and positive attitudes to learning. Provision for the teaching of ICT skills is satisfactory although pupils do not have enough access to computers and other devices to aid their learning across the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding because the personal care that the school provides for all, especially for the pupils with the greatest needs, is excellent. Staff know their pupils exceptionally well. They monitor aspects of personal development carefully and respond sensitively to diverse needs. Pupils and parents benefit enormously from guidance provided by learning and behaviour mentors, and from access to expert counselling.

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are thorough and fully meet current requirements. The school is extremely conscientious in acting to protect any child who may be vulnerable. Pupils receive effective guidance on how to improve their work. Good quality marking and dialogue with staff means that most pupils understand their targets and are well motivated to achieve them. The support and guidance for pupils with complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities are consistently good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is an effective leader. The comments of pupils and parents show that he is highly regarded in the school and wider community. His total commitment to inclusion, to providing pupils with rich and varied learning experiences and to giving good quality support to all members of the school community is shared by all staff. This is the driving force behind the school and at the heart of the good quality of education that the school provides. He is ably supported by the deputy headteacher who in addition to managing the Foundation Stage provision extremely well, has successfully led other school improvement initiatives. All of the school's leaders lead by example and are unstinting in the time and effort they give to supporting staff and making sure that new initiatives work well. Formal monitoring has improved to the point where it gives leaders a clear view of relative strengths and weaknesses. However, some leaders do not have enough opportunities to focus on what is working well and how such insights could improve practice in other areas. Governance is good. Governors use a wealth of professional and community expertise to support and challenge the school effectively.

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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	1
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	3

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

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	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	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

2 November 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of The Bluecoat School, Stamford, PE9 1HE

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to thank you for the welcome you gave us on our recent visit to your school, and for your help in letting us watch you work and play. We really enjoyed seeing you working hard to learn new things, getting ready for the Halloween party and singing about how football mad you are!

When I met with some of the older pupils, they told me how much they enjoyed school and I could see this is true because you all seem very happy there. A lot of you take a full part in the different activities the school arranges. Your parents also told us how well they think the school helps you to learn and to grow up.

We think you and your parents are right to be happy with the school because it is a good school. All of the adults there are working very hard to help you learn new things. You behave well and this helps teachers a lot, and we know you enjoy your lessons. The standards you reach in reading, mathematics and science are improving, you do some very good work in art and design and in some other subjects as well.

The adults all care for you exceptionally well, they help and guide you, keeping you safe and helping you learn. They are especially good at working with people outside the school to help you and your families in lots of ways. The youngest children have an excellent time in the nursery and reception classes, this helps them be ready for learning more as they get older. Mr Howley, the teachers and other adults all work very hard to make sure that the school is well run.

Even though it is a good school, to help make it even better we have asked the teachers to help you get better at writing, and to provide you with more opportunities to use computer skills in all subjects. We have also asked them to work together more to share good ideas and to help each other provide even better lessons for you.

Thank you again for your help. Enjoy your time at Bluecoat and keep working hard!

Yours sincerely

Geof Timms

Lead inspector