

Blackbrook Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123737
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	314699
Inspection dates	2–3 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Chris Grove

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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	240
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	37
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Strang
Headteacher	Moira Hope
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Ashbourne Crescent Taunton TA1 2RA
Telephone number	01823 338138
Fax number	01823 352042

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is of average size and includes Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is also below average. The school has gained the Healthy Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Blackbrook Primary is a good school. It also has some outstanding features. The school has a welcoming atmosphere and a good ethos, as many parents recognise. One parent, for instance, wrote that the school is 'warm and friendly, where my child really does feel part of a community'. There is a good team spirit between the teaching and support staff. Parents gratefully acknowledge the work of teachers, and praise them for their helpfulness and approachability. A good partnership has been developed with parents. Parents are agreed that their children are very happy at school, and this results in pupils' outstanding enjoyment of their education. Several parents are also rightly very positive in their comments on the quality of care for pupils. The pastoral care and support and the academic guidance that the school provide are outstanding. The excellent relationships between pupils and their teachers are an important factor in pupils' enjoyment and the quality of care. Good relationships also contribute well to pupils' good personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Pupils' achievement is good. As a result of good teaching, pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1. Standards at the end of Year 2 have consistently been above average in recent years. Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 2, which is again attributable to good teaching, and the careful analysis of past weaknesses in pupils' performance. Standards at the end of Year 6 rose from average in 2006 to above average in 2007. There was further improvement in all subjects in 2008. The curriculum is good, which supports pupils' learning well, and pupils especially enjoy the good range of extra-curricular activities available to them.

The school has developed good partnerships with the local community which support the school's curriculum well. Good links have been made with other primary schools through the Taunton Learning Partnership and a primary network partnership. The school has also forged good links with local specialist secondary schools. A sports college has made good contributions to the development of aspects of the physical education programme, and the performing arts have been supported through links with an arts college.

The headteacher provides good leadership, and is well supported by the senior management team. The school has a strong commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities, which is largely realised in practice. However, some children in EYFS are disadvantaged because they do not have access to the same quality of outdoor provision as their peers. The school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. Although the school has some well-established links with the local community, links beyond Taunton are just in the early stages of development. The governance of the school is good. The effective steps taken to make improvements since the last inspection, and the good quality of the school's self-evaluation, attest to the school's good capacity to make further improvements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children quickly settle into the EYFS, understand the daily routines, and become confident learners. Teaching assistants as well as teachers are involved in observing and assessing them. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified at an early stage, and are given carefully targeted support. Staff provide excellent care for children, so that their welfare is

outstandingly well promoted. The relationships between children and the teaching and support staff are very good, and this contributes significantly to their outstanding personal development.

Teaching is good and provides a firm basis for children's later learning. Children are offered very good opportunities for choice through the wide variety of activities that are available. They develop their capacity for independent working, which results in good learning. The children's starting points on entry to the school are below national expectations, and especially in terms of their personal and communication skills. By the end of their first year in school, the majority reach expected levels for their age in all areas of learning, including the development of their social skills and their speech and language. Children therefore make good progress and achieve well. The EYFS is well led and managed. Staff plan and work together harmoniously. Communication with parents is good. Parents refer positively to the caring environment, and are happy to express their confidence in school staff. There is good provision for outdoor activities for one of the EYFS classes, but children in the other class are restricted in their access to outdoor space, which limits their opportunities. The effectiveness of the EYFS is good overall.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all children in EYFS have equal access to appropriate outdoor provision.
- Improve community cohesion through a wider range of contacts beyond the locality, in order to promote pupils' understanding of the diversity of other communities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards at Key Stage 1 have generally been significantly above average in the last few years. The improvement in 2008 was due to better results in reading, and especially in writing. In both cases, a greater proportion of pupils gained the higher levels. Boys, in particular, attain above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. At Key Stage 2, standards in science improved markedly in 2008, with smaller improvements in English and mathematics. The proportion of pupils who gained the higher Level 5 standard increased considerably in science, and also in English. Boys' standards are markedly above average in all three subjects. The pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same good progress as other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are friendly and welcoming. They happily discuss their work, and talk animatedly about their school. They work with concentration and enthusiasm, whether independently, in pairs or in small groups. In their classrooms and around the school, they are well behaved. Attendance rates are above average. Pupils show a good knowledge of how to stay safe and keep themselves healthy. They have a very good understanding of right and wrong, and feel confident that they are part of a community, where adults are approachable and take their concerns seriously. Their above average standards in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), and their capacity for teamwork and cooperation, prepare them well for future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The atmosphere in lessons is calm and purposeful because of teachers' good skills in classroom management and organisation. Teachers display good subject knowledge. They know their pupils well and form good relationships with them. They conduct lessons at a good pace, which engages pupils' interest well. Work is well matched to the abilities of different groups of pupils, providing appropriate levels of challenge. Teachers also set good expectations by encouraging pupils to assume some responsibility for their work and taking pride in it. When questioning is incisive, pupils' thinking is stimulated well. Teaching assistants contribute well to pupils' learning, though on occasions they lack a role during whole-class work. Marking and guidance are appropriate to the various age groups and help pupils to make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides well for the development of basic skills. An upgraded computer suite and interactive whiteboards have effectively addressed former weaknesses in ICT provision. Improvements to science provision have emphasised the skills of investigation and enquiry. The programme for personal and social development has been enhanced by including material about personal safety and health. Some blocking of work takes place in order to increase the relevance for pupils, and to improve linkage between subjects. For example, teachers link history and literacy for writing about World War Two. Events such as 'Healthy School Week' and 'Global Dimension Week' enhance pupils' understanding well. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is especially good. Some additional provision is also made for those identified as gifted and talented. The good extra-curricular programme is well attended and includes sports clubs and activities such as art and gardening. The visits' programme includes a residential camp for those in Year 6.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Robust procedures are in place to ensure pupils' health and their safety. All safeguarding requirements are met. The assessment of academic progress is excellent in ensuring that appropriate additional support strategies are put in place for individual pupils. Arrangements for individual and group target setting in English and mathematics are very well understood by pupils, and give them some responsibility for their own learning. The guidance for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is carefully matched to individual needs and is particularly imaginative. Very good use of outside agencies, such as the speech therapy service, provides pupils with additional support. The system of rewards, and opportunities for celebration, are well used to encourage pupils to give of their best. Pupils' transition to secondary education is carefully planned. Measures to improve attendance are effective.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school uses monitoring information well to evaluate and improve provision. This has led to the improvements in pupils' standards at Key Stage 2, and to pupils' good personal development. There are good procedures to check the quality of teaching and learning and of the curriculum. Subject leaders play an important role in the school's monitoring and evaluation processes. The performance management of staff is well established, and is linked well to improvement planning. The school met or exceeded its targets in 2007, and set itself greater challenge through higher targets in 2008 which were also exceeded. Although the school has undertaken some work to help pupils to value diversity, there are not enough opportunities for contact beyond the local community. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They provide good support, and are confident to challenge the school to improve.

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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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
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	1
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 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

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	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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**

October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blackbrook Primary School, Taunton TA1 2RA

- We would like to thank all of you, and your teachers, for your help during the inspection. We enjoyed seeing you in your classrooms and talking to you at playtimes and lunchtimes. Blackbrook Primary is a good school. It is a very happy place for children to be, as many of you and your parents say. There are lots of really good things about your school. These are the most important ones:
 - Your school has a good ethos and a welcoming atmosphere about it.
 - You have good relationships with the teachers and other adults. They take excellent care of you.
 - Many aspects of Reception are good, and some are outstanding.
 - Your enjoyment of school is outstanding.
 - Your personal development is good and your behaviour in lessons and around school is also good.
 - The school has a good curriculum and a good range of extra-curricular activities, in which you participate well.
 - The headteacher and the other school leaders are doing a good job. They do a lot of checking up, so they know what is good about your school and how to improve it.
 - You are making good progress in your learning, and your standards at Year 6 are above average.
 - The teaching in your school is good.
 - Most of your parents are pleased with the school.
 - Your school has good relationships with your parents, and with other schools.
- The headteacher and the other leaders have worked hard to make the school a good place for you. We have asked the school to make things even better by:
 - Ensuring that all the children in Reception have the chance to enjoy an outside area.
 - Giving you more opportunities to have contact with other people not just in Taunton, but also elsewhere in the country and in the world.

You can help by continuing to work hard and taking advantage of the improvements that your teachers will be making. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Chris Grove Lead inspector