

Blakeley Heath Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124192
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314837
Inspection date	1 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Frances Gillam

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	324
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	June Horton
Headteacher	David Burns
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2004
School address	Sytch Lane Wombourne Wolverhampton WV5 0JR
Telephone number	01902 893400
Fax number	01902 326147

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: • the progress made by pupils in mathematics • the progress made by higher attaining girls in reading in Years 1 and 2 • the impact of leadership and management on raising standards, on improving pupils' achievement and on promoting improvements in the quality of provision.

Description of the school

Most pupils who attend this larger than average primary school are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils who require additional support with their learning, have difficulties with their behaviour or have specific physical needs is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Blakeley Heath is a good school. Pupils of all abilities thrive and flourish in its warm and caring environment. This enables the pupils to grow in confidence and to make good progress in their personal development. Pupils say that the high level of care they receive and the school's friendly atmosphere are key reasons why they like coming to school. Staff treat pupils fairly and recognise their efforts. These features help to establish strong and constructive relationships and encourage the pupils to try their best. Parents of pupils who require extra help with their work comment favourably on the well-focused support their children receive. The parents' comments are justified because these pupils do well and make good progress, especially in reading and writing.

Children's attainment when they start school is slightly below the expectations for four-year-olds. They achieve well in the Reception classes and by the time they enter Year 1, children's attainment is average. From their starting point, pupils make good progress and reach above average standards by Year 6. Their well-developed skills, particularly in literacy and information and communication technology, provide pupils with a firm foundation for their future learning. Literacy has been a priority area for the school and 'talking partners' is a particular success with the pupils. They say sharing ideas and discussing their work help them to clarify their thinking and to understand what they are learning. Staff have introduced new ways of working in literacy and these are raising standards, most notably in Years 1 and 2. Here, pupils' progress in reading and writing is developing more quickly than previously. Standards by Year 2 in the national tests in 2007 were the highest for the last five years. These features show that the school has a good capacity to improve and do even better.

Good teaching stimulates pupils' interests, especially in literacy and science lessons. Pupils say their learning in these subjects is exciting. They especially enjoy the opportunities they have to discover things for themselves and to tackle problems using their own ideas and strategies. By comparison, some pupils do not have the same range of opportunities in mathematics. Consequently, their enthusiasm for learning in this subject is not as high. Although pupils make satisfactory progress in mathematics, this does not match the good progress they make in English and science. Teachers provide pupils with clear information about how they can improve their work. They do this through regular marking and by setting challenging targets for pupils to achieve. This is particularly the case in literacy, where pupils have a good idea of how well they are doing and what they need to concentrate on to improve. Pupils enjoy working towards these targets. In mathematics, however, teachers do not always update targets frequently enough to enable pupils to move on more quickly with their learning, especially for the higher attaining. This means that these targets are not always pertinent to the pupils' needs and this contributes to the slower rate of progress in mathematics compared with English and science.

Parents have confidence that the school will care very well for their children. They especially appreciate the way the headteacher makes time for them and their children should they have any concerns. The comment of one parent summed up the view held by many that, 'The headteacher and his team are dedicated to the pupils and to ensuring their happiness in school.' This is correct, because the school has the best interests of its pupils at heart. With the governors, the headteacher and staff have a strong drive to raise standards, to improve pupils' achievements and to promote pupils' personal development and well-being. The school's self-evaluation processes are robust. However, senior leaders acknowledge that the procedures for tracking pupils' progress, especially for tracking the progress of the higher attaining, are

not sharp enough. This means that the school does not always identify quickly enough if these pupils are in danger of falling behind in their learning.

Staff promote healthy lifestyles successfully. They place a strong emphasis on developing pupils' awareness of a balanced diet and the need for regular exercise. Most pupils make sensible choices about what they eat, although some do not always exercise this at lunchtimes. Many pupils take full advantage of the extensive sporting clubs on offer because they have a very good understanding of the importance of exercise in keeping fit. The school is a calm and well-ordered place because pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils appreciate the way that teachers deal with any incidents efficiently and fairly. The attendance rate has increased this year because of the improved stance the school has taken on chasing up absentees. As a result, pupils' attendance is now satisfactory. Pupils stand up for what they believe. They are confident to voice their opinions but also respectful of the views and beliefs of others. Their strong moral understanding underpins their behaviour and the care they show for others. Team games, working in groups and residential visits contribute successfully to developing pupils' social skills. Pupils get on well together and they have a very good understanding of how to stay safe and free from harm. Peer counsellors do a very good job of mediating should disputes arise and they are a friendly place of call for any pupils who may feel lonely.

The school council works very hard on behalf of all pupils. They are rightly pleased with the influence they have on decision-making. They are taking a lead on promoting the healthy schools agenda by running the fruit tuck shop. Pupils also make a very good contribution to the wider community. They eagerly take part in events such as the village carnival and they sing for the elderly. The school's sport teams are regular and successful participants in the local schools' football and netball leagues. The teaching of German and French, visits to France, gardening and art clubs enrich the curriculum and enhance pupils' learning further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Reception classes is good. Bright and attractive areas, in and out of doors, provide children with an exciting environment to explore and discover. Staff devote attention to devising tasks that spark children's interest. These tasks also match carefully the differing ability needs of the children. These features ensure that the children enjoy their learning and make good progress in their work. Children know the classroom routines well. They work equally well in a small group or on their own because relationships are positive. Children treat equipment with respect and share resources sensibly because they know what staff expect of them. Staff are responding very well to the priority to improve children's communication skills. They encourage children to express their ideas and to expand on their explanations. These features help to build the children's confidence and to promote their use of language successfully. As a result, children are developing a good understanding of a wide range of words, which they use confidently to explain what they are doing and what they have learnt.

What the school should do to improve further

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- Ensure that teachers provide more activities that inspire pupils and increase their enjoyment of learning in mathematics.
- Ensure that targets to help pupils improve in mathematics are up-to-date and relevant to pupils' needs.

- Strengthen tracking procedures so that senior leaders and teachers check the progress of higher attaining pupils more carefully.

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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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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

2 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Blakeley Heath Primary School, Wombourne, WV5 0JR

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your good school recently. I enjoyed meeting you and hearing about all the exciting things you do.

You reach standards that are above those expected by Year 6 and you make good progress in your work. This is because the people in charge of your school and your teachers do a good job.

Here are some of things I thought were particularly good about your school.

- You are very good at looking after yourselves. The peer counsellors do a very good job of looking out for others. They help you to behave well and act sensibly.
- You are pleasant and polite and you respect the views and beliefs of others.
- Your school council works very hard on your behalf. It is helping to make your school a better place to be.
- You have a good understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. You make very good use of the sporting activities your school provides because you know the importance of exercise in keeping fit.
- You are very well cared for and this makes you feel safe and secure in school.
- You have a very good range of activities outside normal lessons to choose from and these help you to enjoy school and make your learning more exciting.

I have asked the people in charge and your teachers to work together on three things:

- to make sure that mathematics activities are more exciting and capture your interest
- to make sure that the targets you have to help you improve in mathematics are kept up-to-date and that they are relevant to your needs
- to check more carefully how well you are all doing.

Yours sincerely

Fran Gillam Lead inspector