

Blackwell Community Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112506
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	319446
Inspection dates	8–9 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Jane Melbourne HMI

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	175
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Brian George
Headteacher	Mrs Joy Thompson
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2007
School address	Primrose Hill Blackwell Alfreton DE55 5JG
Telephone number	01773 811281
Fax number	01773 813722

Age group	3-11
Inspection dates	8–9 July 2008
Inspection number	319446

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

Description of the school

This is a slightly smaller than average primary school serving a former Derbyshire mining community. It has a recently extended Foundation Stage Unit housing both Nursery and Reception classes and there is a recently completed Surestart Children's Centre on site. Years 1, 2 and 6 have discrete classes. Years 3 and 5 are currently in combined age classes, each with half of Year 4. From September 2008, Year 3 will also have discrete classes. The school community is representative of the large majority of White British heritage citizens within the locality. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. Whilst there is considerable unemployment in the area, with some pockets of social deprivation, the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals remains below average. The school has a higher than average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, but a smaller than average proportion of pupils with a statement for their special educational need. Attainment on entry is usually below national expectations, but this varies with each cohort. The school has achieved Activemark status through the School Sports Partnership and the Initial Award in Derbyshire's Anti-Bullying Commitment. It has recently been accepted as a Creative Partnerships Enquiry School. At its last inspection, the school was given a notice to improve.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with Section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. The school now provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It has some good features, particularly in the quality of education in the Foundation Stage and the commitment of staff to work in partnership to promote pupils' well-being. Partnership working with parents has also been a priority, and this is developing well. Issues arising from the last inspection have been positively tackled and the school has made satisfactory progress towards these. The school now has its senior management structure firmly in place. With a mostly permanent teaching staff and improved approaches to teaching, this is making a difference and there is no inadequate teaching across the school. Teaching throughout the school is now satisfactory overall with regular examples of good practice. Better quality teaching and assessment of pupils' progress has raised pupils' achievement and rates of progress. However, the legacy of inconsistencies in teaching in the past mean that standards are still patchy in some subjects and some year groups. Standards in writing, mathematics and science are weaker than standards in reading, in which the school has made radical improvement overall due to new successful initiatives.

Although standards in 2007 were around average for English and mathematics in Year 6, given their starting points, current pupils' progress and achievement are satisfactory. These pupils have made up for some of the lost ground in previous years and made reasonable gains since the end of Year 5. The school gives effective support to vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and disabilities, who also make satisfactory progress. It recognises it has still more work to do with the more able pupils, who are not always given work that challenges their thinking enough. All pupils make at least satisfactory progress in their personal development. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory overall, although for the overwhelming majority of pupils it is often good and overall there is a much calmer learning environment around the school. Good relationships exist throughout the school.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Subject leaders are monitoring mainly core subject areas, although there has been no science co-ordinator in place this year. A new appointment from September 2008 will rectify this situation. Less emphasis has been given to the management of the foundation subjects. The school continues to work on the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in other subject areas. Support from the local authority, including input from high quality staff, and governor training and development, has contributed to whole-school improvement. The governors fulfil their roles well and are more aware of the importance of monitoring the school carefully. The formation of pairs of governors to monitor each key issue from last year's inspection has brought about their greater involvement and subsequently more understanding of whole school issues and priorities. The school is providing satisfactory value for money and has a satisfactory capacity to improve in the future given its recent track record.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The quality and standards of the Foundation Stage education are good. Children in the Foundation Stage Unit are helped to learn and develop effectively. Children enjoy an extensive variety of planned and spontaneous play opportunities and learning experiences, which encourage progress in all areas of learning. They achieve well through the adults' optimum use

of questioning and the emphasis given to developing their independence, social, speaking, and listening skills. Staff provide just the right amount of support to help children to succeed. Strong friendships are formed and children work harmoniously together. They are becoming confident to take part in circle time, use books and have a go at writing for themselves.

Daily routines are well established and provide reassurance and security, and children's personal development is good. The good practice in the Unit is not yet underpinned by fully effective systems of observation and assessment, but preparation for gathering information in manageable ways to inform future planning is well under way. Staff ensure that the Foundation Stage curriculum is interesting and relevant to the children's needs. The Unit seeks to actively involve parents in their child's development and ensure this continues in the home by informing them of forthcoming topics and activities to encourage their child further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly in writing, mathematics and science to ensure that the school meets national expectations in all subjects in all year groups.
- Ensure that more able pupils are sufficiently challenged in lessons and attain higher levels.
- Ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good.
- Develop the roles of the curriculum co-ordinators to ensure that all subjects are managed consistently and effectively.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

From starting points that are often below and sometimes well below national expectations, children are now making good progress in the Foundation Stage. Nevertheless, many children still enter Year 1 with weaknesses in speaking, listening and social skills. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are gradually improving and are now broadly average, reflecting some pupils making good progress through Key Stage 1. A similar improvement has been seen in standards at the end of Key Stage 2 where results in the 2007 national tests in English and mathematics were broadly average. Results in science were much lower and adversely affected by weaknesses in comprehension. A sharper and more consistent focus on the development of reading, writing and comprehension skills, is beginning to have a positive impact on standards in all three subjects. Progress in lessons observed was never less than satisfactory and although standards are below average, the achievement of Year 6 pupils is satisfactory when standards on entry are taken into account.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral and cultural development, is satisfactory. Most pupils enjoy school and progress in their social development is improving. Many show an increasing ability to work constructively without the direct supervision of adults. Pupils understand the school's code of conduct and improved behaviour contributes to the better learning and progress they are now making. The majority understand the difference between right and wrong, and are willing to take responsibility. This is seen in, for example,

their enthusiasm for working as monitors, buddies or as members of the school council. Pupils realise the importance of taking exercise and know how to make healthy choices in eating. They feel safe and are confident that any problems are dealt with quickly. Pupils say that instances of bullying are rare and if any do occur, they are dealt with rapidly and generally to the pupils' satisfaction. Attendance is average. The school tries hard to discourage families from taking holidays during term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with some regular examples of good teaching across the school. During the inspection there were still too many satisfactory lessons, although the school has successfully eradicated all inadequate teaching. Pupils settle to learning quickly, mostly listening well to their teachers and they are usually interested in the lessons. They use 'talk partners' well as they develop greater confidence in their speaking skills. The best lessons are well paced and teachers' expectations are well adapted to pupils' needs, swiftly building on pupils' existing knowledge and where gaps in existing learning have been identified. Staff are beginning to use current assessment information to adapt planning to meet the needs of pupils, but this is more effective in some year groups than others. In some lessons, whilst thought is given to the challenge provided for those who are ready for harder work, expectations for learning are still not always realistic. Working actively is now a feature of many lessons, so pupils' enjoyment is greater. The school has introduced challenging targets, although not all pupils are yet familiar enough with them or secure in what they need to do next to achieve them. Resources, including the skills of support staff, are used reasonably effectively.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is being improved to take greater account of the social context in which the school operates and pupils' individual needs. It enhances pupils' lives and expands their horizons. A range of visitors and educational visits enrich the curriculum. Pupils' imaginations are stimulated through, for example, 'Creative Partnership' activities in the school grounds and enterprise related to the Summer Fair. An increasing use of interactive whiteboards is having a positive effect on motivating older pupils, especially boys. The introduction of a new scheme is beginning to impact on raising standards in literacy. A strong emphasis on pupils' personal development helps to improve their social and emotional skills and enhance their self-esteem. The curriculum is also enriched by a range of sporting, musical and other extra-curricular activities, of which there is an increasing number in response to parents' and pupils' requests. Current Class 4 has particularly enjoyed learning to play a brass instrument this year and their interest in music is therefore being nurtured. The recently established Film Club has also got off to an encouraging start and is developing pupils' interest in the media and stimulating their conversational and writing skills. However, the inconsistencies in the co-ordination of some subject areas has impacted on their effectiveness and the progress pupils make.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school safeguards pupils appropriately. The level of pastoral care and welfare is good, providing nurture for those children who need to develop greater confidence from working as a small group. The school is developing stronger relationships with parents and outside agencies, ensuring that all pupils receive appropriate support. Some parents are undertaking family learning sessions at the school to enhance their own skills and knowledge and to help them help their children. The recently established Children's Centre on the school site is positive and is intended to ensure that young children and their families receive high quality support and make a positive transition into the Foundation Stage Unit.

The school is now gathering and using data on pupils more effectively. The academic support and guidance for pupils has improved, but is not yet consistent. Due to staffing difficulties this year, not all additional support programmes have been running. However, all of Year 6 attended booster sessions, which helped prepare them for the end of year tests. The school has positive links with the University of the First Age (UFA) and adopts some of the UFA principles in the support it offers to pupils. For example, pupils may take part in an exciting summer school and most classes use 'Brain Gym' when pupils need to do something more active for a short time.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school is led by a dedicated head teacher and two assistant head teachers who, collectively with other staff and governors, have a shared vision for the school and are committed to its improvement. The subject leadership roles are not yet firmly embedded in all subjects, but the strong emphasis on literacy this year has had a real impact on achievement overall, and most specifically in developing pupils' reading and writing skills. Standards in writing are still too low but the school has identified and prioritised areas for improvement, as it has with mathematics. Governors have been wholly supportive and have taken on more acknowledgement and ownership of their role in terms of monitoring and quality assurance. The school has partially addressed all of the points for improvement from the inspection when it was placed in a category of concern. It is beginning to raise standards and create higher expectations among staff, pupils and parents. The school now sets itself more challenging targets and measures pupils' performance against these. The school has mostly evaluated itself accurately and has an appropriate improvement plan with sensible and achievable priorities for development. With its stable leadership and renewed direction, and its recent track record, the school now has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
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	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

10 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blackwell Community Primary and Nursery School, Blackwell, DE55 5JG

It was a real pleasure to come back to your school again this week and see how well you are all getting on. Mr Thomas and I think you belong to an improving school. The school has made good progress since my visit in January this year and satisfactory progress since the school's main inspection last summer term. This is because, at that time, the school had a lot to do. There are so many positive things taking place that we can understand why you all enjoy coming to Blackwell more than you used to. The Foundation Stage Unit is super and I can see how much you all like the new playground equipment. This helps you all to play much more nicely together at lunchtimes. Your behaviour is much better in class and around the rest of the school.

I was particularly pleased to hear that you are improving in your reading. Next year the school wants you to use your reading skills to improve your writing. Something else for next year is for you all to try and remember your targets. This will help you to be successful in the future. Thank you to all the pupils who came to talk to me or who met with Mr Thomas. This made a really helpful contribution to the inspection.

We want the school to carry on getting better. We have asked everyone to:

- help you to do better in all your subjects and particularly in your writing, maths and science
- help those of you who find learning easy to do even better
- make sure that all of the lessons are good
- check on your progress in all areas of the curriculum and help to find ways of making the subjects more interesting and challenging.

You can help by making sure you always understand the success criteria in the lessons and checking your progress against your targets. Also, tell your teachers if the work they give you is too easy. One last point I need to mention is to remind you to try and make sure your Mums and Dads only take you on holiday out of school term times. You really cannot afford to miss any of your lessons as you have lots of work still to do. Have happy holidays this summer and good luck to the Year 6 in their new school from September.

Yours sincerely

Jane Melbourne Her Majesty's Inspector