

Blackwood School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104211
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	323989
Inspection dates	12–13 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Usha Devi HMI

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	603
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	69
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roland Roberts
Headteacher	Paul Hough
Date of previous school inspection	14 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	13 June 2006
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Blackwood Road Streetly Sutton Coldfield B74 3PH
Telephone number	01213 531876
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Blackwood School is a larger than average primary school situated in Streetly, a residential area on the outskirts of Walsall. Within the school premises, there is a before and after school club. Pupils aged from 4 to 11 attend the club. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are below the national averages. Three quarters of the pupils are White British and the remaining pupils are from other minority ethnic groups. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision is provided for children in the Nursery and Reception classes. The school has achieved Healthy School status, the Quality Mark and Stage 1 of the Dyslexia Friendly Schools Mark.

Since the previous inspection in September 2005, governors have appointed nine new teachers and reorganised the school, so that there are now three classes in every year group. From May this year, the permanent headteacher has been seconded to work elsewhere for two days a week. The deputy headteacher assumes the role of acting headteacher during these two days. A new EYFS coordinator and an information and communication technology (ICT) coordinator were appointed in September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Blackwood School is a satisfactory school and it has some good features. It provides an environment where pupils feel safe and receive a good level of pastoral care and support. A member of the school council said, 'We like our teachers; they are caring, generous and supportive.' Pupils' good personal development and well-being are evident in good behaviour in and around school and their positive attitudes towards learning. The satisfactory curriculum is effectively enriched with a good range of activities additional to the daily lessons, including Spanish and Flamenco. The before- and after school club provides a good level of care. Pupils comment positively about this provision and the good range of activities it offers.

Children make a good start to their education in the EYFS and reach much higher than expected standards when they start Year 1. Achievement declined in 2007 and pupils in Key Stage 2 did not make enough progress in English, mathematics and science. Pupils are now making better progress because of the actions taken by the school. Consequently, achievement is currently satisfactory in Years 1 to 6 and standards remain above average by the time pupils leave the school. The use of assessment information to track pupils' progress and set targets is satisfactory. School leaders are keeping a much closer check on pupils' progress, particularly in writing. This is enabling them to identify pupils who are at risk of underachieving and to provide them with an appropriate level of support in this subject. Consequently, the proportion of pupils making good progress in writing is higher than in reading and mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 2.

Teaching in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory. Although there is some good teaching, there are too many lessons where pupils do not make as much progress as they could. This is because teachers do not consistently set tasks that sufficiently challenge all groups of pupils. The work set for some of the more able does not always enable them to make sufficient gains in their work and achieve standards of which they are capable. The academic guidance that pupils receive is satisfactory. Pupils have targets to help them improve their writing and teachers generally refer to these when they are marking pupils' work. The school is beginning to share reading and mathematics targets with the pupils.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher ensures that pupils' well-being is given a high priority and he is determined to continue improving the school. The deputy headteacher and other staff share the headteacher's enthusiasm to help pupils become good citizens. The headteacher has introduced a number of initiatives to improve the quality of pupils' writing and these are having a positive impact. Nevertheless, leaders and managers are not having as much impact on accelerating pupils' progress in all key areas as they could. This is because the timescale for making changes across the school is not urgent enough and there is an insufficient focus on some of the main priorities, for example the provision for and achievement of, the more able. Governors have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and are very supportive. Training is planned so that all governors can monitor and check the work of the school even more effectively. The recent improvements in pupils' achievement and provision in writing demonstrate that the school has a sound capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The EYFS is collectively well led and managed by staff in the Nursery and Reception and, as a result, provision is good. There are good induction procedures in place for both children and their parents/carers. Teachers and teaching assistants work together well and ensure that children settle in safely and quickly. The children make good progress in the EYFS, with a significant majority achieving well above average standards by the time they enter Year 1. The introduction of a specific phonics programme has had a positive impact on children's language development in particular. Staff plan carefully and ensure that there are many interesting opportunities for children to learn through real-life experience. Following an autumn walk, children were able to talk about the things they had seen. One child explained, 'The leaves are falling and changing colour because it is getting cold.' Staff have accurately identified areas for improvement, as well as strengths. Children have access to a suitable range of well planned activities across the six areas of learning, both indoors and outdoors, although the school has rightly recognised that development of its outdoor area will enhance learning further. The children behave well and play collaboratively, displaying good levels of confidence as well as personal and social skills. Good quality care, understanding of welfare and safeguarding requirements, including risk assessments of the learning environment and equipment, ensure the children are safe and secure.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the rate of pupils' progress throughout the school, especially in mathematics, reading and writing.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring activities meet the needs of all pupils, especially the more able.
- Ensure leaders and managers at all levels bring about more rapid improvement in order to promote good achievement throughout the school.
- Improve outdoor provision in the EYFS.

A small proportion of 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

In 2007, Year 6 pupils' results in the national tests were above national averages. However, standards were not as high as in previous years in English and mathematics. The pupils in Year 6 made less than expected progress in English, mathematics and science. To address this underachievement, the school improved its systems for tracking pupils' progress and provided targeted support for those who were not making enough progress in writing. The latest school assessment information and inspection evidence confirms that standards remain above the national average and pupils are now making satisfactory progress. A more structured approach to teaching writing has been particularly successful, with an increasing proportion of pupils now making good progress in this subject. Good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enables them to achieve as well as other pupils and sometimes better. More able pupils are not always making sufficient progress throughout the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school. They say they feel secure in school and they are proud of their school and their contribution to its development. In the playground, pupils show a good awareness of each other's safety. Bullying is not considered to be an issue and the pupils are confident in the support of the staff should any problems arise. Attendance is good. Pupils have a good understanding of how to live healthy lives because the school provides a varied range of opportunities for exercise. They make a good contribution to the community through fund raising, the school council, supporting the running of the school office and diligently carrying out a range of jobs around school. Pupils' understanding of the multicultural nature of British society is good due to a range of visits, assemblies and lessons offered by the school, including the links with a school in Tanzania. Due to the good level of social skills pupils develop, they are well prepared for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall and some is good. However, it is too variable in the school and consequently the progress that pupils make in the different age groups is uneven. Relationships are good with pupils demonstrating good attitudes to learning and an eagerness to participate in lessons. Practical activities, including the use of interactive whiteboards, effectively engage and interest pupils. Pupils achieve particularly well when teachers use assessment information to plan lessons that meet the different learning needs of pupils. Teaching assistants make a good contribution when they work with individuals or groups of pupils in lessons. However, in too many lessons, the work set does not always challenge pupils, particularly the more able. In some lessons, pupils are passive and not involved in developing their independent learning skills and applying their knowledge effectively. While teachers mark work regularly, this varies in its effectiveness. Pupils do not always receive the guidance they need to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and makes satisfactory provision for the needs of learners. There has been a focus on developing pupils' writing and this has led to an improvement in pupils' progress by the end of Year 6. However, while the curriculum is broad and balanced, the overall provision in literacy and numeracy does not always meet the full range of pupils' capabilities, especially the more able. Good links with other schools and agencies enhance the curriculum. This includes partnerships with a specialist sports college and the local parish church. A wide range of clubs, including sporting and musical activities, successfully enrich the curriculum and pupils willingly participate and enjoy the benefits they offer. The introduction of Spanish is a recent initiative that has further enriched the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Staff place a high priority on the welfare and care of pupils and, as a result, pupils receive a good level of care and support and say they feel safe. There are thorough arrangements for

ensuring pupils' health, safety and welfare. Pupils told inspectors that staff deal with concerns swiftly and sensitively. A Year 6 pupil said, 'Poor behaviour, bullying and racism are not acceptable at this school.' The school works hard to maintain an atmosphere that promotes confidence and builds the self-esteem of all its learners, including those with additional needs, where support is readily available. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Individual targets are in place for literacy. However, these are yet to translate to other areas of the curriculum to improve rates of progress and enable the pupils to improve their own work. Pupils' targets are only moderately challenging.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and deputy headteacher work together well. They have created an environment where relationships are good and individuals feel valued. Through effective links with the local and wider community, the school's promotion of community cohesion is good. Senior staff regularly monitor provision for writing and provide staff and pupils with the necessary support and guidance. As a result, the proportion of pupils making good progress in this subject has increased. The school has started to take the right actions to improve progress in reading and mathematics. The school development plan is satisfactory. It identifies areas for development. However, it does not state how actions will be monitored and the impact of actions evaluated. The school's self-evaluation of its performance is sound but overgenerous. Governors play a key role in improving the accommodation and in managing the budget. They are aware of the need to be more fully involved in regularly checking and evaluating the impact of the school's work on outcomes for pupils.

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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?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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	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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

14 November 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Blackwood School, Streetly, B74 3PH

I am writing to thank you for making us feel so welcome when we inspected your school. We really enjoyed talking with you about your work, visiting your lessons and looking at your work. We would like to say a special thank you to the children on the school council who came to talk to us. Thank you also to the children who came to talk to us about their work. We thought you counted very well in Spanish.

Blackwood School is satisfactory with some aspects that are good. These are some of the things your school does well:

- your behaviour is good and you get on very well with each other
- the youngest children in Nursery and Reception make good progress
- all the adults in the school make sure that you are well looked after
- your headteacher, the staff and the governors are keen to continue improving your school
- you enjoy the extra-curricular activities and visits that are organised for you. We were pleased to hear how much the children had learnt about autumn during their walk. Well done!

To make your school even better, we have asked your headteacher, the staff and governors to make sure you are given every opportunity to achieve your best in mathematics, reading and writing. We have also asked your teachers to make sure your work is well matched to what you need to learn so that there is plenty of challenge, especially for those of you who are capable of working harder. For the youngest children in the school, we have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to improve the outdoor learning environment. Finally, we have asked the senior teachers in the school to make changes more quickly so that you make even better progress throughout the school.

Thank you once again for being so helpful and friendly when we came to see you. We know that you will do your best to help everyone make your school even better. We wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi

Her Majesty's Inspector