

Blacklow Brow Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104445
Local Authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	324049
Inspection date	2 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Clare Henderson

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)	248
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr G Powell
Headteacher	Mrs S Walmsley
Date of previous school inspection	21 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Tarbock Road Huyton Liverpool Merseyside L36 5XW
Telephone number	0151 477 8010
Fax number	0151 477 8012

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: standards and achievement of boys, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and higher attainers in English and mathematics in Years 1 to 6; the effectiveness of assessment practices in promoting pupils' progress; and how the school justifies its evaluation of pupils' personal development and well-being, curriculum and welfare as outstanding. Evidence was collected from observing lessons, scrutinising pupils' work and from the records of pupils' progress. Discussions were held with pupils, staff and representatives of the governing body. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

Blacklow Brow is an over-subscribed average-sized school. The majority of pupils come from relatively advantaged backgrounds as seen in the below average proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. A lower than average percentage of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language and a small but increasing number are from minority ethnic groups. None of these pupils is at an early stage of learning English. The school has a Nursery and Reception class which form its Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision. The school is an Investor in People and has a number of awards in recognition of its work. These include: Healthy Schools, Activemark and Artsmark Gold.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Blacklow Brow is an outstanding school. It creatively uses every nook and cranny to provide an excellent all-round education for its pupils. A principal factor in the success of the school is the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, which is pivotal in establishing a genuine community in which every child is important and valued as an individual. Clearly defined management roles for all members of staff and excellent teamwork complement the leadership. Pupils really enjoy being part of this school, 'I feel proud walking around in my uniform,' is a comment typical of them. Parents agree saying, for example, 'The school offers an excellent environment and atmosphere which enables children to learn and flourish,' and, 'It provides children with great memories for the rest of their lives.'

Standards attained by pupils in the school's national tests in Year 2 and Year 6 have been, for the most part, above the national average since the last inspection in English, mathematics and science. A dip in standards at Year 6 in 2006 was a reflection of pupils' diverse levels of ability on entry. In the school's provisional Key Stage 2 tests in 2008, the achievement of all groups of pupils in Year 6 was outstanding in English, mathematics and science. Standards were well above average in mathematics and science and above average in English. In writing and science all pupils attained the expected levels for their age group and many exceeded them. Pupils' writing, an issue at the last inspection, has improved dramatically, because they practise writing imaginatively across many subjects.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their clear enjoyment of school is reflected in excellent behaviour and above average attendance levels. Pupils say they feel safe and know there is someone to talk to if they have a problem. They are very aware of the need to lead a healthy lifestyle and understand the reasons why it is important to have a healthy diet and plenty of exercise. Pupils take their responsibilities very seriously. For example, as school councillors, prefects or class monitors they transfer their knowledge of being a good citizen, promoting healthy lifestyles or keeping safe, into action. They are excellent role models in the care and support they give others. Such roles are one part of the excellent preparation of pupils for the next stage of their education.

The achievement of all groups of pupils is outstanding across the school because of the excellent quality of teaching and learning. Skilful questioning by teachers, for example, contributes to pupils' excellent progress because it directs and challenges their thinking exceedingly well. Small-group teaching, including that of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is very effective as a result of tasks that provide very good challenge to pupils. Teachers take into account pupils' preferred ways of learning and their interests. Consequently, pupils are motivated and engaged in lessons. They particularly enjoy using computers to help them learn. Problem solving is also popular, especially when it is based, as it often is, on situations that pupils can relate to in their own lives.

The innovative curriculum is outstanding and is held as a beacon of excellence locally and nationally. It reflects the many external awards achieved. It thoroughly motivates pupils because it is interesting and varied. It is used very effectively to develop pupils' global knowledge and their sensitivity to difference and to the diverse needs of others through, for example, twinning with a village in India. Pupils who have particular gifts and talents have first-rate opportunities to develop them, in and out of the school day. Partnerships with other schools enhance tremendously the breadth and depth of the curriculum, for example in the excellent provision

of sports and arts, and in the teaching of information and communication technology. Music is a strong focus in the creative curriculum. The yearly musical production, the opportunity to play an instrument or to sing in the school choir, for example, develop pupils' personal skills, spirituality and musical talents exceptionally well. Pupils have an opportunity to learn French and benefit from a very good range of after-school activities. These enable pupils to use and develop their talents and interests very well.

Care, guidance and support of pupils are outstanding. Procedures are in place to keep pupils safe and staff work closely with outside agencies to ensure that specialist support is available when needed. The highly effective learning mentor is instrumental in ensuring that appropriate strategies are in place for those pupils who need specific support so that they can enjoy their learning and make excellent progress. Academic guidance is very effective. The use of assessment is consistent and pupils' progress is tracked regularly. Pupils' targets give them a clear focus for their learning. Self-assessment in lessons encourages pupils to be increasingly critical about the quality of their work and that of their classmates. Teachers' marking tells pupils what they have achieved in their work and what they need to do to improve.

The school is not complacent and all staff and the excellent governing body are involved in a continual and relentless drive to make the school even better. It has an accurate picture of its effectiveness identified through rigorous self-evaluation. Checking of pupils' achievement by subject leaders is sharply focused on measuring progress and setting next steps. Excellent leadership at all levels demonstrates that the school has outstanding capacity to improve and that it provides outstanding value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children join Nursery with skills that are for the most part below those typically expected for their age. Aspects of their mathematical and communication skills are particularly low. As a result of a rich, vibrant and stimulating environment, excellent teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants and excellent links with parents, children get off to a flying start. They rapidly make up ground so that by the time they transfer to Year 1 most children are working securely within the goals expected and a small proportion exceed them. Parents speak very highly of the excellent level of care their children receive. Enthusiastic staff make learning fun. The curriculum gives children many opportunities to extend and consolidate their learning. Consequently, children are really motivated to learn and engage enthusiastically in activities. High priority is given to the teaching of letters and sounds, while retaining a fun, play-based learning environment. As a result, children make significant progress in understanding about letter sounds which supports their early reading and writing. Excellent use is made of the outdoor learning environment to stimulate children's learning and enjoyment. The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. It ensures that detailed assessments of children are used to match activities very well to the needs of individuals and also to inform children's transfer to Year 1. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early through these very effective procedures. This ensures that they are given additional support and make excellent progress.

What the school should do to improve further

The school has an extremely clear view of how it can continue to develop and there are no additional measures necessary beyond those given in the school improvement plan.

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?	1
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
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?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

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

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

Inspection of Blacklow Brow Primary School, Liverpool, L36 5XW

Thank you all for the wonderful welcome you gave me when I inspected your school. I enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn. I particularly enjoyed listening to the school choir as they rehearsed for the forthcoming concert in Manchester. I would now like to tell you the really excellent things about your school.

Blacklow Brow is an outstanding school and you are right to be proud of it. Children in Nursery and Reception get an excellent start and have a great many opportunities to learn with each other through play. You continue to make exceptionally good progress in all other years and, by the time you leave at the end of Year 6, you reach high standards, particularly in mathematics, science and writing. This is because the teaching you receive is outstanding and you also work very hard.

Your behaviour is excellent and you look after each other exceedingly well. You enjoy working in groups and you like to help your classmates when they find things difficult. Members of the school council work hard to find out what you think and, as a result, have made your school even better. You particularly like taking part in the very wide range of school-based and extra-curricular events in arts, sports and music which your teachers have introduced.

Your teachers and teaching assistants take very good care of you and make sure that everyone feels safe and secure. They also give you a lot of advice about how you can improve your work. Your headteacher and all your other teachers know exactly how to make sure that your school continues to improve.

Please continue to work hard and enjoy your studies.