

Blurton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124002
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	328026
Inspection dates	22–23 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Roger Sadler

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)	285
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	Pat Jones
Headteacher	Julia Luke
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Poplar Drive Blurton Stoke-on-Trent ST3 3AZ
Telephone number	01782 235025
Fax number	01782 235026

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and few pupils come from homes where English is not the main language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above that found nationally. Most of these difficulties relate to pupils' emotional or language development. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much higher than average.

Early Years Foundation Stage provision is located in the Nursery and two Reception classes. Children enter Nursery full time at the beginning of the school year of their fourth birthday and move to one of two Reception classes at the beginning of the next school year.

The school has gained the Healthy Schools Award and the Activemark for physical education and exercise. It has also won an Artsmark silver award. The school has also been awarded the Children and Young People's Quality award for its procedures to gather and act upon pupils' views.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It is well led and managed. The headteacher has ensured that governors, other leaders and staff focus on ensuring that pupils progress well. Very ambitious targets are set for pupils' future attainment and staff and pupils rise well to these challenges. Pupils show a strong commitment to working hard and doing well, and say, 'It is cool to succeed at school.' Staff ensure that pupils achieve well, and that their personal development and well-being are good. Systems for checking and evaluating the work of the school are effective and the school regularly assesses and carefully monitors the progress of each pupil, and extra support is given to those at risk of not reaching expected standards. The school has improved considerably since the previous inspection and standards are rising, especially in younger classes. Good teaching and effective academic monitoring and guidance are key reasons why rates of progress are improving, and the school has good capacity to continue to improve in the future.

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and throughout the rest of the school is good and the vast majority of pupils progress well to attain standards only a little short of those expected for their ages by the time they reach the older classes. By Year 6, standards in mathematics, reading and science are average but standards in writing, although improved this year, are below national averages. Opportunities are sometimes missed to develop older pupils' writing skills in subjects other than English and this slows their progress in writing. However, teachers give pupils many opportunities to hold short discussions with a partner and this helps them not only to develop understanding but also to improve their skills and confidence in speaking and listening. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress well because they receive carefully tailored support from teachers and teaching assistants.

Staff manage classes well and pupils are friendly, polite and concentrate well in lessons. Their positive attitudes to learning and their excellent knowledge of how to act with regard to their own safety and that of others help them to thoroughly enjoy their time in this happy school. Parents' and pupils' views of the school are overwhelmingly positive. One parent commented, 'The school is much better now and has improved a lot.' The curriculum is good and staff provide a wide range of interesting experiences that support pupils' strong enjoyment of school. They not only enjoy lessons but also are appreciative of the wide range of clubs and opportunities available to them. Younger pupils have especially enjoyed and benefited from their recent topic on castles. Pupils have limited understanding of other ways of life in both Britain and abroad, and lack firsthand experience of meeting and working alongside those with different faiths or from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, although the school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion, it is aware of the need to strengthen this further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Skills in communication, language and literacy are well below expected levels when children enter Nursery. Pupils are carefully inducted to school and soon begin to make good progress. There is strong emphasis on language and communication skills. Every opportunity is used to extend children's vocabulary and understanding. Throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage, teaching is well planned and interesting so that children enjoy learning and interacting with one another. All adults carefully assess and analyse the learning of each child and provide activities that are well matched to individual needs. Children achieve well and make good

progress in all aspects of learning, including their personal, social and emotional development. However, by the end of Reception, some are still not attaining in line with nationally expected standards, especially in their language development. There are good opportunities for children to play and learn independently as well as individually, in small groups and as a class. Learning activities are carefully planned and children are provided with a broad and interesting range of activities in classrooms. However, the school is aware that outside learning areas are not used so well to support learning in all areas of the curriculum, and appropriate improvements are planned. Staff make good provision for children's welfare and the Nursery and Reception provide a safe and happy environment for learning. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and staff have a clear and shared understanding of where improvements are needed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by ensuring that specific writing skills are developed in subjects other than English in older classes.
- Improve the way that the school contributes to community cohesion and develop pupils' experience and understanding of the ways of life and beliefs of other cultures in modern Britain.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress and achieve well. Many children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills much lower than those expected for children of their ages. Year 1 and 2 pupils make good progress and standards have risen well this year. Year 2 pupils have attained average standards in mathematics this year. Standards have improved in reading and writing, in part due to daily high quality teaching of letters and sounds. Although pupils make strong progress in these subjects, standards remain below average. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 3 to 6, and standards in Year 6 have also risen this year. Standards in mathematics and science are average but standards in English are a little below national averages. Although more pupils have attained the higher levels in their assessments this year and more able pupils often make good progress, the progress of more able pupils is occasionally slowed a little in some lessons when they are given insufficient additional challenge. Pupils make good progress in speaking and listening due to the many opportunities they are given to hold discussions with partners or in small groups. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress due to the regular, good-quality additional support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' positive attitudes to learning, good attendance and great enjoyment of school have helped pupils to attain higher standards over the last three years. Pupils work hard and are proud of their achievements, and act with great understanding of how to conduct themselves safely and act with regard for the safety of others. They understand how to lead healthy lives, understand the importance of eating healthy foods and take full advantage of the many sports and exercise activities made available to them. Pupils, especially older pupils, make an excellent contribution to the school community. They take very seriously the responsibilities given to them, for example as members of the school council. Their involvement in the local community, although satisfactory, is not fully developed. Although pupils show satisfactory cultural development, they have limited knowledge or experience of other cultures or ways of life in

modern Britain. Pupils' good personal and social skills and their improving literacy and numeracy skills have prepared them well for the next stage of education and the world of work beyond. Pupils' social, moral and spiritual development is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers manage pupils very well. As a result, pupils behave and respond well to the fast pace of lessons and teachers' high expectations of concentration and hard work. Teaching assistants work very well with teachers and enable those who find learning more difficult to keep up in whole-class lessons. They often give strong support to learning when they work in small groups with those who are working a little below expected standards or with pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teachers use interactive whiteboards well to add impact and interest to whole-class teaching. The teaching of letters and sounds is excellent in younger classes and is helping pupils make improved progress in their reading and writing. Occasionally, work is not always sufficiently challenging for the more able pupils to make progress at a faster rate. Pupils are given helpful checklists and frequent reminders of what learning is expected in lessons. However, these are sometimes not used fully to help pupils assess their own progress and to help them see where they might improve particular aspects of their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides strong emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills. Consequently, standards in literacy, numeracy and science are rising. Provision for reading, and speaking and listening feature prominently in literacy work and this is helping raise standards. Pupils say that staff often make learning interesting and fun and many say they enjoy lessons. The school's broad and interesting curriculum is enriched well by visits, visitors and sports provision. The school has good provision for subjects such as history, geography, and information and communication technology but there are still some weaknesses in the way that the school promotes pupils' cultural development. Provision for pupils' personal development is strong and does much to contribute to their positive self-esteem and strong attitudes to learning and to school. Although standards of writing are improving, opportunities to apply, develop and correct particular writing skills in subjects other than English are sometimes missed.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Academic guidance is good and pastoral care excellent. Procedures for child protection and safeguarding, including those for internet safety, fully meet current requirements. Arrangements for ensuring good attendance are excellent and are resulting in improved levels of attendance throughout the school. The pastoral needs of each pupil are well known to staff and all are treated sensitively and individually. The school has many reward systems that inspire pupils to do their best. Staff pay great attention to developing pupils' confidence that they can succeed and do well at school. The school works closely with other agencies, such as speech and language, and physiotherapy support services and the educational psychologist, to good effect. There are excellent systems to assess and monitor the progress of each individual. The headteacher and deputy headteacher regularly meet individual teachers to discuss the progress of each pupil

and how this might be supported and accelerated. Consequently, all staff show strong commitment to meeting ambitious targets for pupils' learning. In many classes, marking provides pupils with clear and specific guidance on where they should concentrate and this is helping improve their learning. However, teachers do not always follow up marking to ensure that pupils have responded to the guidance provided.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Due to strong leadership by the headteacher, all staff are fully committed to raising standards and have also been successful in spreading this commitment to pupils. The headteacher and deputy encourage and enable other staff to develop leadership roles, especially in English, mathematics and science. Although other subjects have designated leaders, their role in monitoring and evaluating standards and the quality of provision is less well developed. Communication with parents is good and many parents feel that they are kept well informed about events at school and how they might help their children at home. The role and effectiveness of governors is much improved since the previous inspection and they are now fully involved in checking on the work of the school and challenging and supporting senior leaders. Effective staff training and regular follow-up checks ensure that key aspects of teaching and learning, such as how reading is taught, are carried out consistently effectively. The school is aware of the need to improve the way that it contributes to community cohesion.

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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?	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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	1
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?	2

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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
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**

24 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blurton Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST3 3AZ

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to inspect your school. We send special thanks to those of you who gave up part of your lunchtime to talk with us. We thoroughly enjoyed talking with you and your teachers and watching you learn.

Blurton Primary is a good school. It is well run, giving you a good education and a good preparation for life in your next school and in the wider community. Adults teach you well so that you make good progress. I am pleased yours is such a happy school and that you and your parents are pleased with it.

It is good to see how much you enjoy your time at school and that most of you attend regularly. You all have an excellent understanding of how to act safely and act with care for the safety of others. You understand what is right and what is wrong. You also show consideration for others and are very friendly to each other. You should be proud of your good behaviour and manners and your willingness to work hard. Those of you who find learning difficult make good progress because the school helps you learn.

There are many things that your headteacher, the staff and the governors want to improve because they want your school to get even better. We agree with them that there are two important things to be done first. These are to:

- help those of you in the older classes improve your writing skills, not only in literacy lessons but also in other subjects
- help you develop a better understanding of other ways of life and beliefs in Britain and other countries.

I send you our very best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Roger Sadler

Lead inspector