

# Bleakhouse Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103934
<b>Local Authority</b>	Sandwell
<b>Inspection number</b>	336197
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 December 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Terry Elston

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	225
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Marilyn Roe
<b>Headteacher</b>	John Bates
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 May 2007
<b>School address</b>	Bleakhouse Road Oldbury West Midlands
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, the tracking of pupils' progress, curricular planning documents, examples of the ways the school promotes community cohesion, evidence of lesson observations undertaken by inspectors and the school's leaders, and information from questionnaires completed by pupils, staff and 51 parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- Whether the provision for mathematics and science enables pupils to make sufficient progress.
- The effectiveness of the leadership at all levels at helping teachers improve their skills.
- The extent to which the school promotes pupils' awareness of the diversity of faiths and cultures in the world.

## Information about the school

This is a school of average size with the large majority of pupils coming from White British families. None of the pupils is at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than average. The school has recently gained the Healthy Schools Platinum, National Healthy Schools and Activemark awards. The governing body manages care facilities before and after school.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

Bleakhouse Junior School provides a satisfactory education for the pupils. They enjoy school, work hard to improve their skills and nearly all attend regularly. Pupils' personal skills develop well, and they have a good sense of right and wrong. The behaviour of pupils is good, whether they are in class or outside. Their very good spiritual development is evident in the way even the youngest pupils show a deep concern for those in the world who suffer hardship. Their cultural awareness is satisfactory, but few have a deep awareness of how people outside their local area live and worship.

Pupils make satisfactory progress, and standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6. Pupils do particularly well in their writing because teachers encourage them to write well in all subjects. Standards in mathematics and science are not as high as those in English because more able pupils do not always achieve as well as they could, and some pupils struggle with problem-solving tasks.

Pupils are full of praise for their teachers, particularly the way they make learning fun. Many lessons involve pupils in doing practical tasks such as using computers and interactive whiteboards to investigate mathematical calculations or the best words to use in their writing, and these really motivate them. However, the quality of teaching and the rate of pupils' learning vary from class to class. This explains why progress overall is satisfactory rather than good.

The school has developed an interesting curriculum that uses famous books as its central theme. This approach really captures pupils' imagination as they immerse themselves in tales of wizards in imaginary castles or the adventures of the Iron Man.

Parents rightly feel the school cares for their children well. Pupils know who to turn to if they have problems and are made to feel safe at school. Those whose circumstances make them vulnerable benefit from very good support and grow in confidence.

The headteacher shows a firm commitment to raising standards while ensuring that pupils develop as caring, well-rounded citizens. The headteacher is supported well by other staff with management responsibilities who share his high aspirations for the school. The leaders have rigorous systems for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning, but their action to support teachers in their development is not always effective. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection and is set to improve further.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in mathematics and science by:

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- giving pupils better guidance on how to tackle problem-solving tasks
- providing more open-ended challenges to enable more able pupils to attain the high standards of which they are capable.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - giving teachers clear guidance on how to improve their work
  - providing more opportunities for them to learn from the best teachers in school
  - monitoring the progress of pupils in individual classes more rigorously.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to learn about the diversity of faiths and cultures in the United Kingdom and across the world.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

In many of the lessons observed, and almost always in Year 6, pupils were seen to be learning well and showed a thirst for knowledge. However, variations in the quality of lessons meant that pupils' overall progress in developing their skills and understanding was leading to only average standards for the older age groups. Most read fluently, and make steady progress in their writing because of the way teachers encourage them to write as well in topic work as they do in English lessons. In mathematics, standards are improving because of the good focus on developing their quick recall of number facts. However, many find it hard to work out which calculations to use when asked to solve problems. There is a similar pattern in science, where pupils complete investigations planned for them competently, but struggle when they have to plan their own experiments.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve satisfactorily, and many do well in their reading. They have every opportunity to contribute to lessons and relish answering questions before others in the class.

Pupils' good awareness of how to live healthy lives is evident in the way they talk with authority of the best foods to eat and enjoy the healthy options served at lunchtime. Numbers staying for school lunches have doubled since the new menus were introduced this year. They say how safe they feel at school because bullying is rare and, as one said, 'If it does happen, teachers just sort it.' Pupils contribute well to their community through enthusiastic involvement as members of the school council and eco committee, working as Buddies to help those who feel lonely, and organising charity events to support the local children's hospital.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

### How effective is the provision?

Teachers generally plan lessons well to meet the needs of all pupils in the class. They are good at giving pupils the confidence to answer difficult questions, so those from all ability groups contribute to class discussions. However, more able pupils are not always challenged to make the most of their talents. For example, in a really good mathematics lesson, the teacher had the confidence to ask the top group to set others on their table complex number problems, and they had great fun making them as hard as they could. They flew through their work and made rapid progress. In another lesson, more able pupils just did slightly harder sums and they coasted. Teachers assess pupils' progress methodically and most provide good guidance in their marking to help them improve their work.

The curriculum is planned well to give pupils good opportunities to enhance their literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects. The many visits and visitors help bring subjects to life, and make learning interesting. The many extra-curricular clubs are popular, and help pupils develop their skills in sporting and creative activities. The well organised personal, social and health education curriculum helps pupils learn about personal safety and the dangers of activities such as smoking and unsupervised use of the internet.

Parents say how much they appreciate the good care, support and guidance offered to their children by all staff. A typical comment was, 'My child always feels safe at school and knows there is always someone there to help him if he's upset.' The systems for ensuring good behaviour are applied consistently so that all pupils know the rules. Pupils are prepared well to move from the infants and to the next stages of their education by comprehensive links with other schools. Many parents take advantage of the good care

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provision for their children in the clubs before and after school. These are well run, and provide good opportunities for children to enjoy a wide range of activities in a safe environment.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b> Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	<b>3</b>
	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher leads well, with high expectations of pupils and staff. His strong commitment to working closely with parents and other local schools does much to enhance pupils' personal and academic development. He delegates responsibilities well to other leaders, who share his vision for the school's future. The leaders analyse national test results rigorously, and are good at rectifying weaknesses. For example, shortcomings in pupils' writing standards were identified, and action to improve the curriculum yielded good improvements. The leaders evaluate the quality of teaching and learning through regular lesson observations, but provide too few opportunities for less experienced teachers to learn from the best practice in school. The leaders are committed to providing equal opportunities for all pupils, whatever their background, and they tackle any form of discrimination rigorously. The governing body supports the school well, but does not always challenge the leaders sufficiently about shortcomings in standards or the quality of teaching. In order to promote community cohesion, the school has established some links with contrasting schools elsewhere in the United Kingdom and overseas. However, these are at an early stage and pupils have, as yet, reaped little benefit. Safeguarding is taken very seriously, and all systems to protect pupils are robust.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b> Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	<b>3</b>
	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>

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<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Views of parents and carers

The large majority of parents are very satisfied with the provision. They say their children enjoy school and feel well looked after. They believe that much of the teaching is good, but a few feel, with some justification, that their children could make better progress. A small minority say that communication with the school needs to be improved, but inspectors found that the school does much to inform parents about its work and makes every effort to meet them at the start and end of the day.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bleakhouse Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 51 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 225 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	20	39	31	61	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	12	25	36	75	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	10	20	32	64	6	12	2	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	25	31	61	7	14	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	11	22	36	72	3	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	12	24	34	67	3	6	2	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	24	37	76	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	10	20	38	78	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	9	20	33	72	4	9	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	7	15	33	72	5	11	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	15	31	65	7	15	3	6
The school is led and managed effectively	8	17	35	74	2	4	2	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	11	22	39	78	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



9 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bleakhouse Junior School, Oldbury, B68 9DS

Thank you for making the inspectors so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed seeing you work hard in lessons, get on so well with each other and perform your excellent Christmas play. Your school is satisfactory, which means some things are good but some could be better.

What we found out about your school:

You make satisfactory progress, but you could do better in science and mathematics.

You behave well and make good friends.

You know a lot about how to live healthy lives and stay safe.

You think a lot about people in the world who are not as fortunate as you.

Your leaders help the school to run smoothly.

The activities provided for you are interesting, and you enjoy the many clubs at lunchtime and after school that teach you important skills in things like music, Italian and sport.

Your teachers make learning enjoyable and help you when you find things difficult.

All staff at the school take good care of you and keep you safe.

What we would like your school to do now:

Help you to learn faster in mathematics and science, particularly when you do investigations. Those of you who find learning easy can help by thinking carefully about how to plan your own work.

Give your teachers better advice on how to teach even better.

Provide more opportunities for you to learn about the lives of other people in this country and elsewhere in the world.

Good luck for the future and make sure you come to school every day.

Yours sincerely

Terry Elston

Lead inspector

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