

Blackwater Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111866
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	337764
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Jonathan Palk HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	86
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Margaret Davies
Headteacher	Mrs Lesley Harris
Date of previous school inspection	6 April 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. They spent 50% of their time observing lessons and examples of pupils' work. The inspectors visited eight lessons and observed three teachers. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, looked at documentation, including governors' minutes, the tracking of pupils' progress, individual education plans of a proportion of pupils with special educational needs, documents relating to safeguarding, the school improvement plan and lesson plans, and analysed 23 completed questionnaires from parents, as well as those submitted by pupils and staff.

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

- the impact of recent strategies to improve teaching and learning in mathematics and writing
- the impact of partnerships on pupils' progress
- how effectively the school is improving attendance
- how well leaders and managers, including the governing body, monitor the impact of policies.

Information about the school

Blackwater School is a small, village primary school. The pupils are very largely from White British backgrounds and all pupils speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a part-time, pre-school provision for 11 children under four-years-old, managed by the governing body, and a combined Reception and Year 1 class. The school was re-accredited in 2008 for the Investors in People Award. They were awarded the Quality Mark for Basic Skills in July 2007, the Activemark for physical education in 2008 and Healthy Schools Status in July 2009. Since the school was last inspected there have been several staff changes. Two of the four teachers in the school are covering for periods of staff absence.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The headteacher is very much at the heart of the school's success and this is recognised by the parents and staff. She is ably supported by staff who provide good teaching and an effective team of teaching assistants. Each pupil is valued and given every chance to flourish and excel with tailored support and work that is carefully matched to their needs.

Standards have improved quickly over the last three years and are above average. A significant factor in the good progress pupils make has been the consistent focus on the teaching of writing skills. This has helped secure attainment in writing that is in line with that for reading. The more recent focus on problem solving and practical mathematics work has led to improved rates of progress for more able pupils in Key Stage 2 but has also had an impact on pupils' positive attitudes to the subject.

Pupils really enjoy their education because 'they are treated as part of a family' and are consulted on what can be improved. As a consequence, they behave well and care for each other. The school works successfully with pupils and staff from other schools to enhance and enrich curriculum opportunities for their pupils. This has a positive impact on pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyles and on their personal development. The well-established links with specialist services are used to assist families and pupils who are finding learning more difficult. The school has taken the view that in working closely with a significant minority of parents this would encourage better attendance. This has not proved to be an effective strategy and authorised absence remains too high. This means that there are unnecessary breaks in learning programmes for a few pupils and teaching assistant support has to be directed at helping those who have been absent from school to catch up.

The school knows itself well. The governors and headteacher are enthusiastic about developing staff expertise with a particular eye on how strengths in the school can be complemented. This is very evident in the extent to which the particular requirements of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are understood. The governors have a satisfactory understanding of strengths and areas for development but are less effective at monitoring the impact of policies, particularly for attendance, and in helping the headteacher plan strategically for the future. Middle leaders are becoming more adept at using a wider range of indicators to measure the impact of actions taken to improve the school, although success criteria are too general. It is for these reasons combined with the uncertainty over future staffing that capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide sharper and more measurable success criteria in development planning, so that governors and middle leaders can:
 - increase their role in strategic development planning
 - evaluate the impact of actions to bring about improvements
 - monitor the strong features of the school's performance
- Improve attendance and meet the targets set by the local authority for this academic year by:
 - implementing the school's attendance policy rigorously
 - working with local schools to agree a common approach to reducing absence.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children enter the school with levels of skills as typically expected for their age and which improve to above average by the end of the Reception Year. This good progress was evident during lessons, particularly in their communication, language and literacy development and their personal, social and emotional development. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and performance data for the last three years show that standards have been broadly average. The proportions gaining higher levels in national tests and teacher-assessed tasks in Year 2 have not been as high as they could be. Work is now more challenging for them with a greater emphasis on problem solving in mathematics and with higher expectations in writing.

Performance data at the end of Key Stage 2 for the last three years indicate that pupils reached average standards. An upward trend is evident in the last two years and attainment was significantly above average in 2009. This is set to continue this year and for the school to exceed its challenging targets. Good teaching and a systematic focus on reading, writing and mathematics development has contributed to this improvement. The well-targeted support for those with additional needs, the less-able pupils and the more reluctant writers means that the majority make good and sometimes outstanding progress.

Pupils are keen to do well and show high levels of enthusiasm. They show resilience when asked to work independently, and respond well to teachers' questions, particularly where these really probe their thinking and understanding. Pupils have a good understanding of their own personal conduct, behaviour and how to keep safe. There is a good level of participation by pupils in activities outside school including sports and art. Pupils take part in local community events which support village life. Through partnerships with other schools they are developing their understanding of multi-ethnic British and global communities. The school council enjoys the support of fellow pupils and there is good contribution by the whole school in improving the lives of others through fund raising for charities. A significant few are persistent absentees and an above average number of days are lost to authorised absence. However, the good

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standards, combined with their keen appetite for teamwork and their enthusiasm for learning, prepare pupils overall satisfactorily for their transition to secondary school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Lessons are engaging with a good balance of practical activities, discussion and group working. The good pace of lessons is maintained through punchy questioning that motivates and inspires pupils of all abilities. Work is mostly well matched to pupils' needs as identified through the good use of assessment information. Planning is of good quality with precise expectations of what is to be achieved by groups of pupils. The specific expectations link well with the most recent analysis of pupils' attainment but also focus precisely on key success criteria. Pupils are very clear about their targets and are guided well through good marking to recognise how they are improving. This encourages good motivation.

There is a strong focus on linking opportunities for reading and writing to a theme-based curriculum, for example, by using a theme such as 'transport'. The themes are increasing good-quality opportunities to develop problem-solving and computer

¹ 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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skills, although at present these have yet to be mapped systematically. The school has taken effective steps to improve behaviour by involving pupils in the management of playtimes. There is exceptionally sensitive support for those with specific learning, social and emotional needs.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides tremendous inspiration and motivation for all the school community. This has ensured that good progress has been made in improving aspects of provision and promoting equality since the last inspection. Open and honest discussion about school improvement is embedded into the culture of the school and sustained by the good attention given to professional development for all staff.

The school shows a strong commitment to promoting cohesion within and outside the school community. The school has a good understanding of its own community through its strong links with parents, village and local schools. It is successfully extending the opportunities for the largely monocultural experiences of pupils by establishing links with global communities.

There is good quality monitoring of pupils' achievements and teaching and learning. The use of progress data is well developed and used to pinpoint where the main emphasis for support is targeted. Governors have formed an effective partnership with staff to enable them to monitor subjects but are not yet fully involved at a strategic level in planning and evaluating the quality of actions to bring about school improvement. Measurable targets are not widely used as success criteria in the school's improvement planning. Expenditure has been well managed to push forward the school's priorities. Routine monitoring of policies and their impact, particularly those relating to attendance and safeguarding, by the governing body, is at an early stage.

Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory. Risk assessments are detailed and pupils and parents are very positive about safety in general. Improvements to transition arrangements and good links with a local secondary school help sustain pupils' good personal development and well-being. The good outcomes for pupils, coupled to efficient resource allocation, demonstrate good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children are happy, confident and enthusiastic learners. Progress in the development of key skills is good because of effective teaching and good leadership. The class teachers and skilled teaching assistants work as a very effective team to meet children’s needs in the two rooms. Staff share resources and planning effectively, to provide for continuous progress in children’s development. Children settle very quickly and feel secure in school as a result of a carefully structured induction programme, praised by several parents and carers.

Day-to-day assessment is good. The large classroom is well suited to the children’s needs and there is a good match of exciting activities to meet their interests and help them learn and develop. Children receive a good balance of adult-led activities and those they choose for themselves.

Planning is good. It makes effective use of assessment information to ensure that all the areas of learning are being addressed and to show how children can be encouraged to make the most of their own interests. For example, the children have created their own ‘airport check-in’ from materials they have resourced themselves. The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage is successfully improving practice in the outdoor area, for example, in developing the free flow of activities between indoors and outdoors. The potential for yet greater sophistication in monitoring the coverage of the Early Years Foundation Stage is recognised by the leader as the next priority for development.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The parents and carers of more than a quarter of the school population responded to the Ofsted questionnaire and 10 wrote explaining their answers. Their responses show very high levels of satisfaction with the work of the school. A very small minority voiced reservations, although these focused on issues with individuals rather than the school as a whole. Several parents and carers made positive comments about the way that the school has supported their children to 'be happy at school' and 'offers them a well-rounded education'.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Blackwater Primary 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 23 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 86 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	14	61	9	39	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	13	57	10	44	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	8	35	14	61	1	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	7	30	12	52	1	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	18	78	5	22	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	8	35	13	57	2	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	57	10	44	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)	11	48	9	39	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	10	44	12	52	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	39	8	35	2	9	1	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	39	10	43	1	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	13	57	9	39	1	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	14	61	9	39	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"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



12 February 2010

Dear pupils

Inspection of Blackwater primary School, Truro TR4 8ES

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed being in your lessons and meeting with you, and were particularly impressed by the enthusiasm you have for school and the care you show towards each other. You and your parents are very positive about your school and we certainly agreed with them.

- Your school continues to provide you with a good education.
- The headteacher does a wonderful job and she and the adults are dedicated to doing the best for you all.
- You are enjoying your lessons because they are interesting and 'fun'.
- The teachers are keeping a good track of how you are making progress and have made some important changes in how they teach you to write and gain confidence in mathematics.
- You behave well and feel safe and well cared for.

The inspectors and the headteacher agree that there are some things that could be better and so we have asked the headteacher and the governors to ensure that:

- teachers and governors find ways to check that the action they are taking to improve the school is having the desired effect
- more of you attend regularly.

You can all play your part by not missing days from school unnecessarily. I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Palk

Her Majesty's Inspector

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