

Blackawton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113186
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	338118
Inspection dates	29–30 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Alexander Baxter

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	138
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barrie Taylor
Headteacher	David Vaughn Strudwick
Date of previous school inspection	15 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons, and five teachers were observed. The inspectors attended an assembly, observed break and lunchtime activities and held meetings with governors, staff, pupils and parents. They looked at plans and policies, records of assessments and the tracking of pupils' progress. The lead inspector also visited and spoke with pupils at their residential visit. The provision and planning for pupils who are vulnerable or have special educational needs and/or disabilities were evaluated. In addition, responses in 39 parental questionnaires, 76 pupils' questionnaires and 20 staff questionnaires were analysed.

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

- the consistency of teachers' use of assessment to inform and involve pupils in self-evaluation and so raise their progress
- the impact of the school's efforts to raise standards in science and mathematics
- the ability of leaders and managers to bring continued improvement.

Information about the school

The large majority of pupils at this small village school are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, but there is an above average number of pupils who have a statement of mostly physical and profound needs. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage in a mixed Reception/Year1 class. Amongst others, the school holds the Healthy School award. At the time of the inspection, most Year 5 and 6 pupils were attending a residential educational visit. In September 2010, the school will become part of a federation of three local schools. A privately run pre-school operates on the school site and shares some of the school's outdoor facilities.

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

1

Main findings

Blackawton Primary School is a good school. It is a rapidly improving school, which has moved forward considerably since the previous inspection three years ago. This reflects the exceptional drive and ambition of the headteacher and the united and very effective support of governors and staff in improving provision and pupils' academic progress.

Staff and governors, in close partnership with parents, outside agencies and the local community, have shared a diligent commitment to sustain and build upon a distinctive ethos of care and creativity. The pupils' excellent adoption of healthy living, great enjoyment and very enthusiastic commitment to all aspects of school life reflect the outstanding range of stimulating curricular activities and the exceptional care, guidance and support provided by the adults who work in the school.

Senior leaders, including governors, carry out very effective procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. By identifying and targeting the right areas for improvement, the school has raised provision and pupils' achievements in science from weaknesses into significant strengths. Other improvements include extending the range of learning activities, and the teachers' more effective development of pupils as independent learners, now evident, for example, in the pupils' improved ability to solve mathematical and scientific problems and to undertake research using computers. These improvements, accompanied by a very skilfully considered, managed and now imminent move to form a Federation with two local schools, reflect the school's determined and outstanding capacity to sustain further improvement into the future.

Children have a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Good teaching and learning throughout the school lead to attainment by the end of Year 6 that is above average in reading, mathematics and science. Many pupils also develop good skills in speaking and listening, art and sport and also show well-developed historical, geographical and environmental understanding for their age. Pupils' writing has improved improved and is broadly average in Year 6. These outcomes represent good achievement, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. At this stage, however, the school is good rather than outstanding because strategies to develop pupils' handwriting, spelling and punctuation skills more consistently and systematically across the school have not been in place long enough to impact to best effect. Pupils sometimes spend too long listening and do not get onto work which is well matched to their individual abilities as quickly as they might. In addition, whilst attendance has improved improved and is broadly average, too many holidays are still taken in term time, leading to some pupils not being able to benefit fully from all that the school has to offer.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' progress over the next 12 months, especially in English, by:
 - teaching a more consistent style of handwriting and developing pupils' spelling and punctuation skills more systematically throughout the school
 - ensuring that pupils do not spend too long sitting listening in large groups in lessons and are enabled to get on with studies which match their own ability more quickly.
- Raise pupils' attendance over the next two terms by working with parents to reduce the number of holidays taken in school term time.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' good learning and positive responses in lessons are typified by excellent relationships, the willing sharing of ideas and pupils' keenness to do well. This was seen, for example, in Years 1 and 2 where the pupils showed care not to spoil each other's work and in Years 3 and 4 as they took turns to solve multiplication problems in a game of noughts and crosses. Pupils' willingness to offer ideas and, in response to teachers' prompting, to share their strategies for solving problems, enriches their understanding and progress. Work in pupils' books, especially their topic studies, also shows the pupils' developing ability to reflect about a variety of issues. Their writing, drawing and recorded research using computers shows the pupils' good breadth of vocabulary and understanding of words and of their above average skills in history, geography and their environmental awareness. This is evident in their work on the detrimental loss of Amazonian forest, the need to preserve Dartmoor's natural heritage and about life in Saxon England.

All groups of pupils are making similarly good progress; on many occasions, however, in response to exemplary care and support, pupils with complex needs make exceptional steps towards their specific targets. Over the past year, and especially in science and mathematics, those with particular gifts and talents have been increasingly challenged and are also making good progress. From starting points generally expected of children upon entry to school, pupils benefit from consistently good teaching, learning and progress as they move up through the school. Their above average levels of attainment in reading, mathematics, science and information and communication technology and in speaking and listening by the end of Year 6 reflect good achievement. Although attainment in writing continues to improve and is broadly average, some pupils still have difficulty spelling words and punctuating their writing accurately and several cloud their improved expressive writing through weakness in handwriting.

Observations in all parts of the school showed that pupils are very considerate of each other during activities and most behave very well and are genuinely interested in what their classmates have to say. A few younger pupils sometimes lose interest and fidget during discussions and still need and receive close guidance in how to behave and listen to the views of others. Pupils show an excellent sense of responsibility when they take

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on a range of school responsibilities, which include supporting others at break times as playground mediators. Older pupils, in particular, provide younger ones with appropriate role models. Pupils know that their voice matters and, through their contributions to a variety of local and wider charities, give credence to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance has improved and is satisfactory. Although persistent absence is much reduced, too many pupils are still taken on holiday in term time. Even so, pupils are developing into sensible and responsible young people who are prepared well for the next stage in their education and life beyond 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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and learning has been much improved since the previous inspection. Teachers now use assessment to pitch learning at the right levels for pupils' ages and stages consistently well. In addition, pupils are now given more responsibility and are engaged effectively in evaluating their own and each other's work and in 'target-setting and getting'. Teachers give good information to pupils, both orally and when marking pupils' work. As a result, pupils are clear about what they are learning.

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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Outstanding aspects of teaching observed included specialist subject knowledge in art, science and music, where the teachers' flair and imagination rub off on pupils and they respond with enthusiasm and enjoyment. This was evident in a science lesson where pupils investigated habitats and created 'choice chambers' for woodlice in order to test their predictions. Similarly positive outcomes were seen to heart-warming effect as pupils on their residential visit accompanied their teacher's very lively and skilful piano playing by singing with great joy, harmony and sense of community.

Teachers generally use questioning well to make connections with pupils' previous learning and to build new learning effectively from the pupils' ideas. In addition, they use interactive whiteboards to good effect in providing pictorial cues to support the pupils' own imaginative thinking. Occasionally, in the mixed-age classes, teachers' introductions or end-of-lesson discussions continue for too long and some pupils lose interest or others are not challenged enough. Teachers plan well, however, and group work and adult support are matched closely to the pupils' abilities. Pupils spend most time undertaking practical activity, a form of learning which they say they most enjoy and which is the key factor promoting the pupils' much improved progress in mathematics and science.

Care, guidance and support are strengths of the school, which lie at the heart of its ethos. Teaching assistants are used well to support pupils. In particular, the inclusive care given to pupils with very complex needs is exemplary and enables all pupils to make valued contributions to their own and each other's learning.

Pupils enjoy a very stimulating curriculum enriched by topics and practical events. These include, for example, the 'Viking market', the 'bee project' and the re-enactment of the 'Battle of Bosworth'. Importantly, these examples represent how the curriculum is superbly responsive to the pupils' own ideas and interests, a factor which significantly promotes the pupils' excellent commitment to learning. As Year 6 pupils enthused, 'Teachers really trust us. They value our ideas and by acting as a 'magpie', we share ideas and contribute to each other's learning.' Many pupils take part in the excellent range of extra-curricular activities which further enhance their expressive art and sporting skills. They benefit from regular swimming in an on-site swimming pool and their excellent adoption of healthy living is reflected in the school's Healthy School award.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

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How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides exemplary leadership. He empowers senior colleagues and governors to work as a team. Together, they make excellent contributions to the work of the school. Their shared ambition for the school, supported by excellent self-evaluation and targeting of the right priorities, have been key instruments in helping the school to bring about continued improvements. For example, as well as the headteacher, staff with specific leadership responsibilities now play a full part in evaluating and improving teaching and learning.

The leaders and managers' proven ability to eliminate discrimination and to sustain equality of opportunity for all pupils is underpinned by the school's total commitment to inclusion. This is evident in the very close relationships with parents and outside agencies and in the consistent and high quality care provided for all the pupils. The staff place high value on the pupils' responses and ideas in lessons. They track the pupils' progress diligently to ensure that all groups have their needs met to similarly good effect.

Safeguarding procedures are extremely thorough and staff 'go the extra mile' to supervise and ensure the safe movement of pupils in all parts of the school, especially, for example, when using the field at break and lunch times. The pupils' genuine consideration for others reflects the school's good contribution to community cohesion. This includes a much respected role in the local community and good links with a school in Ethiopia. The school now has plans to promote the national aspect of community cohesion more effectively through its link with a school in Tower Hamlets, London.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Views of parents and carers

Responses to the Ofsted questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive. Additional comments entered on questionnaires, typically such as, 'I could not ask for a better or happier school for my child' and 'We are delighted with the school! Its ethos is very inclusive and empowering' reflect these very complimentary views. A few parents were interviewed informally in the playground and also expressed great satisfaction with the work of the school. Parents and carers clearly value this school because of the way it cares for their children and its provision of an excellent range of interesting learning activities. The only consensus within the very few negative comments expressed made reference to the very limited accommodation, but were careful to express appreciation for the staff's efforts in providing a good quality of education in such challenging circumstances. This is an observation with which the inspectors fully concur.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Blackawton 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 39 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 138 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	24	62	14	36	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	21	54	17	44	1	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	46	19	49	2	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	56	11	28	5	13	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	22	56	14	36	2	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	44	17	44	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	54	12	31	2	5	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)	18	46	16	41	0	0	1	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	46	17	44	4	10	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	46	18	46	2	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	44	16	41	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	18	46	18	46	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	22	56	15	38	1	3	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



30 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blackawton Primary School, Totnes TQ9 7BE

Thank you for making us so very welcome when we visited your school. It was good to meet with you all. Special thanks go to the group of Year 6 pupils who so willingly took time to talk with me during their exciting residential experience. We were extremely impressed by many things, but especially by your very positive attitudes to learning and the excellent care provided for you by the staff of the school. We understand why you greatly enjoy your time at your school because you do so many interesting activities. We have no hesitation in agreeing with your headteacher that Blackawton is a good school that continues to improve. □

These are some of the other excellent things we found.

- Your care for each other and contribution to the school and your local community are outstanding.
- You really enjoy school and rightfully feel safe and live very healthily. □
- Your headteacher, staff and governors work very closely together and are very skilled at running the school and know how to keep the school improving.
- The school cooperates very effectively with your parents and other people to help you to achieve well.

To help the school to improve, we have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to do two things. □ □

- Help some of you to make better progress by improving your handwriting, spelling and punctuation skills and by moving you into group work more quickly in some lessons.
- Work with some of your parents to reduce holidays taken during term time.

You can help to make the school even better by always giving of your best whenever you write.

Very good wishes for the future,

Yours sincerely

Alex Baxter Lead Inspector

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