

Bligh Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118500
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	339228
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Margaret Coussins

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	225
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kate Broom
Headteacher	Tina Gobell
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They spent over 40% of their time looking at learning. They observed 13 lessons and seven teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, the headteacher and deputy headteacher and other teachers with leadership responsibilities. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of school documentation, including the development plan, monitoring records, the school's self-evaluation document, pupils' progress records and the safeguarding procedures. Questionnaires were received and analysed from 141 parents and carers.

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

- the effectiveness of the school's work in raising attainment in reading and writing and the progress of boys
- the effectiveness of the use of assessment information to plan for pupils' learning
- the impact of the work of all leaders and managers, including governors, on school improvement.

Information about the school

Bligh Infant School forms part of a designated children's centre that offers extended services, including day-care nursery provision, breakfast and after-school clubs. The extended provision was not inspected on this occasion because it has been inspected recently. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Pupils' needs relate mainly to speech, language and communication difficulties. The school makes provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in a Nursery and two Reception classes, which operate as an Early Years Foundation Stage unit. The school has an Activemark award. The headteacher was appointed in September 2009.

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

2

Main findings

Bligh Infants is a good school where pupils thoroughly enjoy their time, behave well and feel safe and secure. They are enthusiastic about their learning and good, trusting relationships between pupils and staff help to create a happy, caring ethos. One pupil said, 'Everybody is kind in the school.' Pupils and their families benefit enormously from the school's strong partnership with the children's centre and the day-care nursery.

Children start in the Nursery or Reception Year with skills, knowledge and understanding that are below expected levels for their ages and are particularly low in communication, language and literacy skills. They make good progress and by the time they leave at the end of Year 2, attainment is broadly average. Pupils' reading and writing skills have improved to average levels although more achieve the expected levels in mathematics.

Teaching is good. It has improved because work is more precisely matched to pupils' learning needs and assessment is informing the next steps in learning. As a result, most pupils of all abilities, including those with speech, language and communication difficulties, achieve well. On a few occasions however, tasks are not sufficiently fine-tuned to meet the needs of all pupils as effectively as they could be and the pace of learning slows when pupils have to sit for too long on the carpet. This can sometimes slow the progress of more able pupils and those who find learning more difficult. The whole-school focus on writing has successfully closed the gap between the achievement of boys and girls. There are, however, still some inconsistencies in the degree to which tasks motivate and inspire boys because they are not always clear why they are writing or who they are writing for.

After a prolonged period of considerable disruption to learning due to extensive building work and staff illness, the new headteacher's very effective leadership has instigated rapid and successful developments that have set the school back on track. Rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning quickly identified the strengths and weaknesses of the school and led to prompt action to address shortcomings. The good capacity for further improvement is evident in the notable improvements in teaching and learning and better progress, which have moved the school forward from the satisfactory judgement at the last inspection. The governing body, which, due to many vacancies, was judged as inadequate in the last inspection, now has full membership. Although many governors are very new to the role, they are providing adequate support and challenge to the school and have clear plans to further improve the effectiveness of their work.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Sustain the better progress pupils are making in reading and writing by:
 - ensuring that in all lessons work is closely matched to pupils' different abilities so that it fully stretches the most able and provides the right level of support for those who find the work more difficult
 - pacing lessons consistently well so that pupils have enough time for independent learning
 - making sure that tasks consistently tap into the interests of boys and provide them with real audiences and purposes for their work to sustain their motivation.
- Strengthen the impact of the new and supportive governing body as it works to further improve the school's effectiveness.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils' enjoyment of learning is evident in the way they engage in their lessons with enthusiasm, apply themselves well to their learning and achieve well. Attendance is above average. Pupils work hard, concentrate well and are proud of their achievements. On occasion they lose interest when they have to listen to the teacher for too long. One child said: 'When we sit on the carpet for too long we get bored and some people get silly.' On these occasions, the more able pupils are not challenged sufficiently while the needs of less able pupils are not met well enough. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar good progress to others as their needs are quickly identified and effective support is given.

A strong feature in all the lessons seen is the opportunity for pupils to share ideas with their 'talk partners'. This was seen to good effect when pupils were learning to write traditional tales and could clarify their ideas and extend their thinking before they started to plan their own stories. Role play opportunities help to motivate and enthuse, as when pupils were excited to 'step through the magic mirror' to help create the characters they were to write about.

Pupils enjoy their responsibilities in the school, such as being special helpers, taking the registers and getting the fruit and milk for the class. The work of the school to gain an Activemark award helps pupils to develop a good understanding of how to keep healthy and fit. The school council is very active and its members are proud of their achievements in planning the developments for the playground.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Parents and carers are very positive about the quality of care, guidance and support the school provides. One parent wrote: 'Staff seem to go that extra mile and genuinely care about the children.' Careful tracking identifies pupils who are falling behind and effective support is given to accelerate their progress. Teamwork among the adults is very effective and contributes to good outcomes for the pupils. Usually, adults help to extend pupils' learning well through challenging questioning which helps them think and extends their language skills. Good arrangements to support pupils and their families at each stage of the school help them to settle quickly into new classes and year groups. The curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal skills, including their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A good range of extra activities, including visits to places of interest, visitors to school and clubs, enriches learning. The school maintains a focus on constantly striving to improve teaching strategies and the curriculum to ensure that they meet the needs of all learners. Topics are sometimes selected to try and engage the interests of boys, such as space and the planet Earth, but the tasks that are planned do not always motivate boys sufficiently.

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

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The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2
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How effective are leadership and management?

The commitment and drive of the headteacher to ensure that all pupils have the very best learning experiences have successfully improved the school from satisfactory to good. This has been achieved through accurate self-evaluation and rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning. The consistency of approach of all leaders in implementing their shared vision for the school is an example of the effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement. Across the team there is a dedication to removing barriers to learning and celebrating the achievements of pupils at every stage. All staff are diligent in ensuring that all pupils enjoy equality of opportunity and no discrimination.

The school meets the statutory requirements for safeguarding and parents confirm that the school takes good care of their children and that children feel safe. The school works in close partnership with parents to involve them fully in their children's learning. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion through its close links with the children's centre and its active engagement with parents and children to share, understand and celebrate cultural diversity. The school is in the process of developing worthwhile links with schools in other parts of Great Britain and abroad.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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	2
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

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

Children make good progress and reach the expected goals in all aspects of their learning. Early writing skills are encouraged, valued and celebrated and particular effort has been made to motivate boys to write, but sometimes the range of writing opportunities is not broad enough.

Priority is given to developing children's confidence, independence and social skills, which prepares them well for learning and they quickly settle into the routines and organisation of the school day. Staff organise a good range of activities, both inside and outside, planned around themes and topics that promote different aspects of children's learning. For example, children celebrated the Chinese New Year by making music, tasting Chinese food and enjoying role play in the 'Chinese restaurant'. Planning ensures that there is an effective balance of activities that are led by adults and opportunities for children to choose and initiate their own learning. There is an effective and consistent approach to teaching letters and sounds. The school has correctly identified the need to improve the outdoor area and has secured funding to implement its plans to do this.

There is close liaison with parents and carers who appreciate the regular opportunities to support their children's learning in school. Leadership is good and the constant review and evaluation ensure that there is a clear plan for improvement.

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

Parents expressed overwhelmingly positive views about the school. Almost all of the parents and carers who returned questionnaires agreed that they were happy with their children's experience at school and that their children enjoy coming to school.

Inspectors fully endorse the views of parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bligh Infant 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 141 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	101	72	39	28	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	92	65	48	34	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	85	60	52	37	3	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	83	59	54	38	2	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	85	60	54	38	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	81	57	56	40	2	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	66	47	61	43	1	1	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)	69	47	61	43	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	69	47	67	48	3	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	65	46	67	48	5	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	67	48	69	49	3	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	81	57	56	40	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	96	68	41	29	1	1	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 Bligh Infant School, Strood, ME2 2XJ

You may remember that three inspectors came to your school recently. I am writing to thank you for being so friendly and telling us about your school. We agree with you and your parents and carers that Bligh Infant School is a good school and a safe and happy place to be.

You work hard and make good progress so that you do as well as pupils in other schools in your reading, writing and mathematics. We could see how hard you have worked to improve your writing. We were very pleased to hear that you enjoy coming to school. Well done for trying so hard to become fit and healthy and for coming to school so regularly. We have asked everyone in your school to do the following important things.

- Help you to make even better progress in reading and writing by making sure that those of you who find learning easier are given more challenges and those of you who find work a bit hard are given more help.
- Make sure that you do not spend too long sitting on the carpet so that you can get on with your work more quickly.
- Make sure that the boys are really interested in the things they have to read and write about so that they learn as well as the girls.

The governors are the adults who help the school to work well. They try hard to help the headteacher and all the teachers. We have asked the governors to check even more closely how well the school is doing so that it can keep getting better and better.

Thank you again for being so polite and interesting to talk to and well done for helping your community so nicely!

Yours sincerely

Margaret Coussins

Lead inspector

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