

Blakesley Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	121959
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	395731
Inspection dates	15–16 May 2012
Lead inspector	Michael Bartleman

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	79
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine Rodhouse
Headteacher	Mary Barnett
Date of previous school inspection	13 November 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Michael Bartleman

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed teaching and learning in nine lessons for a total of five hours, observing four different teachers. Due to national tests and school assessment arrangements, the majority of lessons observed were during the afternoon session. The inspector held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. The inspector took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation, including school data on pupils' attainment and progress, procedures for keeping pupils safe and the school's own evaluation. He analysed questionnaires from 40 parents and carers, as well as those completed by a sample of staff and pupils.

Information about the school

This is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is lower than the national average as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of educational needs is below average. An increasing number of pupils join or leave the school part way through their primary education. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the same class as some pupils from Year 1; other pupils are taught in three mixed-aged classes. The school did not meet the government's floor standards in 2011 which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- Blakesley is a satisfactory school. It is improving rapidly but is not good because a few pupils do not make good year-on-year progress in mathematics and not enough teaching is good or better. Parents and carers are supportive of the school; many wrote comments referring to the school’s welcoming atmosphere. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- The achievement of all pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, is satisfactory. Typically, their achievement in reading is better than in writing and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, but improving. Good teaching is evident when assessment information is used effectively to plan activities that take full account of pupils’ learning needs so they make good progress. This is not yet a consistent feature of all lessons. Teachers’ marking is similarly inconsistent; in some classes, pupils are not provided with precise guidance on how to improve their work. The teaching and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is consistently good.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Respectful and supportive relationships throughout the school enable pupils to develop good levels of self-esteem and confidence. They work together well and enjoy school. Attendance is above average.
- The headteacher, with the support of the governing body, has shown good leadership by implementing effective plans to address the fall in attainment in Year 6 last year. These initiatives, including the focus on staff training and regular checks on school performance, have led to improvements in teaching and pupils’ achievement. Middle leaders are not yet fully involved in monitoring and evaluating the school’s performance in their areas of responsibility. The curriculum successfully meets the needs of all pupils.

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

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2013, eliminate the inconsistencies and strengthen the overall quality of teaching so that it is good or better by:
 - sharing more widely the good practice that exists within the school
 - giving pupils advice on how to improve their work and clear targets that will help them understand how to achieve the next steps in their learning
 - ensuring there is an appropriate balance between the time teachers spend talking to pupils and the time pupils have to work independently
 - ensuring that teaching moves learning forward at a good pace so that pupils remain fully involved
 - using assessment information to ensure that tasks are appropriately matched to pupils' needs and abilities.

- By July 2013, increase the proportion of pupils who make good progress in mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that pupils have the basic skills and knowledge to support their mental strategies and calculation skills
 - providing additional opportunities to use mathematics and problem solving in other areas of the curriculum.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

When they start school, children's skills and understanding are broadly at the levels expected for their age. They grow in confidence as they take part in activities both indoors and outside. Children are now achieving levels above those expected for their age when they enter Year 1. Boys and girls of all abilities make satisfactory progress in Years 1 to 6 and attain average standards by the end of Year 6. High mobility and insufficient good teaching resulted in low attainment at Year 6 in 2011. The pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to reach average standards which represents a good improvement compared with the previous year. However, some pupils' basic number skills are insecure, and this leads to a lack of confidence in mental strategies and in the ability to perform calculations.

The school's data and the work in pupils' books indicate that pupils' progress has improved. This improvement was also evident in the lessons observed, and was most apparent in the classes where teachers make good use of assessment information and where planning is tightly focused on taking learning forward. This was demonstrated effectively in the class for pupils in Years 3 and 4, where pupils of all abilities consolidated their knowledge and understanding of using adjectives to improve their previously written story. The class teacher modelled the activity well so all pupils understood the task. The most-able pupils were challenged to use adverbs

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and a range of punctuation. Pupils responded well to complete the task and extend their learning.

Pupils learn a range of strategies that help them to read with confidence and to reach above average standards by Year 2 and Year 6. They make good use of their knowledge of phonics (the sounds which letters make) to read unfamiliar text and enjoy reading a wide variety of books.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils. The appropriate support and effective questioning they receive, particularly from teaching assistants, enables them to work confidently in lessons and progress as well as other pupils. The gap between the attainment of boys and girls is closing rapidly. The majority of parents and carers are confident that their children are taught well and make good progress, a view also held by pupils themselves. Inspection evidence shows that pupils' progress is improving and that in some lessons pupils do make good progress. However, this has not been the case in previous years and remaining inconsistencies mean pupils' progress is no better than satisfactory.

Quality of teaching

The inspection findings of satisfactory teaching match the school's own assessments. Pupils think they are well taught as do the majority of parents. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, there is a good balance of child-initiated and adult-supported tasks, and effective use of both the indoor and outdoor environments. This improved provision is having a good impact on pupils' progress and attainment. Children are fully engaged, as was seen when they were taking different roles in 'the police garage' and 'ice-cream parlour'. Both activities developed imagination, language and writing opportunities well. The good intervention by adults, when they question or suggest things while children explore through play, takes learning forward effectively.

The school's focus on improving teaching and learning is having a good impact on teachers' planning, the pace of lessons and the consolidation of basic skills. Teachers now plan more opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills. However, these improvements are not firmly embedded across the school. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical knowledge in other areas of the curriculum. In a minority of lessons where teaching is less than good, activities are largely presented as a whole-class or year-group activity, with the result that some pupils are not challenged enough to deepen their learning, and the pace of learning slows because teachers talk for too long. Marking is encouraging but does not always provide guidance to help pupils improve their work.

Lessons are well structured and teachers use a good range of resources to motivate and engage pupils, including the use of the outside classroom for drama activities. The teaching of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is satisfactory. Pupils generally work hard, and are keen to share their learning with

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each other. For example, following effective questioning by the class teacher, pupils in Years 1 and 2 eagerly explored and developed their knowledge of number properties in groups which gave them the confidence to write number sentences of their own. Reading is taught well, and teachers have a good understanding of the teaching of phonics. This effective practice is reflected in pupils' enthusiasm for reading and the standards they reach.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

In lessons and around the school, behaviour is at least good and sometimes outstanding. The school is a harmonious community where pupils make a good contribution through the school council, acting as playground buddies or mentors for those new to the school. Because they are well cared for, pupils are confident that staff will sort any issue out. This view is reflected in the confidence expressed by pupils that bullying of any kind is rare but would be dealt with effectively if it did arise. They feel extremely safe at school. They are aware that bullying can exist in a variety of forms, including cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying related to sex, gender, race and disability. Through a well-planned curriculum, pupils are helped to develop a range of strategies to manage everyday risks for themselves.

Most parents and carers believe that behaviour is good and that their children are kept safe. A small minority of parents and carers raised concerns about behaviour. Inspectors found that most pupils behave well. School records support the view that behaviour over time is good and there are effective systems to help the very small number of pupils who find it difficult to behave well.

Pupils' attendance is above average which reflects their enjoyment of learning and their eagerness to do well. They take pleasure in working together in lessons, showing good levels of cooperation and a willingness to listen to each other's views and ideas. Pupils are polite, friendly and courteous.

Leadership and management

Following the fall in attainment at Year 6 in 2011, the headteacher and governing body undertook a stringent review of all practices. Their accurate self-evaluation and the increasing involvement of middle leaders in monitoring and evaluation ensures that all staff have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Performance management and focused professional development are used well to help staff realise the school's raised expectations, but there is insufficient sharing of good practice to speed up the process. Although inconsistencies remain, the improvements secured so far this year, reflected in pupils' faster progress and higher attainment, demonstrate the school's capacity to bring about further improvement. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements, and are managed well and applied consistently.

The system for tracking pupils' progress has been refined and is being used effectively to identify individuals who need additional support to close gaps in their

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learning. The provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is well managed and increasingly effective, particularly in reading. The governing body is highly supportive, manages the resources of this small school effectively and provides a good level of challenge. The school has a good partnership with parents and carers and keeps them informed of pupils' progress.

The school has a clear commitment to promoting equality of opportunity, and discrimination in any form is not tolerated. Strong links with external agencies, together with staff who know their pupils well and an ethos of care, help to ensure that pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable receive the support they need. Transition arrangements for pupils leaving and joining the school are well developed. The increasing number of pupils who join the school at times other than the start of term or the Reception class are quickly assessed, supported and integrated into the life of the school

The school has a range of effective partnerships to provide opportunities in music, arts and sport as well as additional support for pupils who are gifted and talented. The broad and interesting curriculum is continuing to develop. Specialist teaching in music and French greatly benefits the pupils. Regular themed days and school productions are thoroughly enjoyed by the pupils and provide an effective focus for learning. The school's caring, inclusive ethos and assemblies foster a strong sense of community. Well-planned enrichment activities and a wide range of extra-curricular clubs, including residential visits and visitors, help to develop pupils' understanding of other faiths and cultures and have a good impact on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



17 May 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Blakesley Church of England Primary School, Towcester,
NN12 8RD**

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school. I appreciated talking to you and enjoyed reading your questionnaires, hearing some of you read and looking at the work you do in lessons. The school is giving you a satisfactory education, and it is getting better. The standard of your reading is above that of other pupils of your age. Your standards in writing and mathematics are similar to those reached by most other pupils of your age.

Here are some of the things I liked most about the school.

- You enjoy your lessons and work well by yourselves and together.
- Your attendance is above average and you behave well and work hard.
- You are learning more in lessons and making better progress this year because the quality of teaching is improving.
- The school takes good care of you, so you feel very safe.
- The headteacher and staff are working hard to make sure that the school improves.

To make sure that all of you make even better progress, we have asked your headteacher and other school leaders to do the following things.

- To make sure that the activities they plan for you in lessons always help you to learn more, and to show you clearly what you need to do to improve it when they mark your work.
- To make your progress in mathematics as good as your progress in reading and writing so that you become more confident with your number skills and calculations and are able to use these skills in other areas of your learning.

You can help by continuing to behave well and trying hard in your lessons.

Yours sincerely

Michael Bartleman
Lead inspector

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