

Blenheim Primary School and Children's Centre

School Way, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 4HX

Inspection dates 20–21 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Attainment levels and progress rates in English and mathematics are now rising in all key stages.
- Literacy and numeracy skills are carefully reinforced in other subjects.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because of well-planned interventions and the supportive work of the nurture group.
- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. A very small number of lessons require improvement.
- Pupils are well behaved in lessons and around the school. They say they feel safe and parents and carers agree.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- Pupils are confident learners who are keen to help develop their school.
- The headteacher provides good leadership. He is working effectively with staff, including subject leaders and governors to improve attainment and teaching.
- Governors understand the school's needs and provide a good level of challenge in taking it forward.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teaching is outstanding.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to take a lead in lessons by presenting or explaining their findings.
- Attendance is low, despite the continual efforts of the school to improve it.
- In a few lessons, challenge is not sufficiently high and work is not closely enough matched to individual needs.
- Some marking does not pick up on spelling errors or make comments that are closely linked to pupils' targets.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited 29 lessons taught by 20 staff and observed a range of intervention work. They conducted joint observations with senior staff.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, governors, staff and two groups of pupils. An inspector spoke to parents and carers in the playground and the lead inspector spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone.
- Inspectors took account of the 46 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 57 staff questionnaire responses in planning and carrying out the inspection.
- The inspectors observed the school's work. They also looked at the school's improvement plan, data on pupils' progress and attainment, monitoring and self-evaluation procedures, a range of policies and procedures and arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils.
- Pupils' books were examined in lessons and in a separate work sample with senior staff.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading.

Inspection team

Michael Sutherland-Harper, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Sara Wakefield	Additional Inspector
Heather Housden	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The very large majority of pupils are White British.
- A number of pupils arrive at times other than the normal starting dates.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above the national average. The proportions of those supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is above the national average. This is additional government funding for children known to be eligible for free school meals, children in the care of the local authority and children with a parent in the armed forces.
- Alternative provision is provided for a very small number of pupils through arrangements made with the local authority to meet individual pupils' specific learning needs. These pupils are either educated at home or are supported by the local authority Child and Mental Health Services team as their needs dictate.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has close links with a children's centre, which shares the same site but which was not inspected as part of this inspection.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the overall quality of teaching to outstanding by:
 - providing a greater number of opportunities for pupils to present their findings out loud in class and develop the confidence to explain their reasoning and the methods they have used to solve problems
 - making sure that work in lessons is always closely matched to pupils' needs and incorporates high levels of challenge
 - ensuring that all marking procedures are consistent, with close attention being paid to pupils' spelling and direct links made to any targets they have been set.
- Continue to work to improve the attendance of pupils who are frequently absent by identifying and adopting approaches similar to those used successfully by other schools.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Attainment on entry to the school is well below national expectations. Children make good progress as they move through the Nursery and Reception classes because of careful planning and continual practise of key skills. Close work with the neighbouring children's centre, which also offers Nursery provision, ensures a consistent approach for children entering the Reception classes. The most able children are quickly identified so their needs can be met and less able children are well supported throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Pupils enter Year 1 with standards broadly in line with national expectations in all areas of learning. Good progress is maintained through Key Stage 1 in English and mathematics where standards have improved in each of the past three years to the point where they now match national averages. The school has worked effectively to develop writing skills at Key Stage 1 through an increased range of stimulating resources and further training for staff in providing effective interventions. Mathematical skills are developed through regular mental mathematics sessions and activities linked to everyday situations like using money.
- The school has made good use of setting in small groups to reinforce pupils' understanding of the links between sounds and letters (phonics) and this has led to better attainment in the case of less able pupils. Consequently, results in the Year 1 screening check have improved dramatically this year. The school is working equally hard to develop pupils' writing skills so that achievement in writing increasingly matches that in reading.
- Attainment in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2 is above national averages, especially in reading, and also for the most able pupils in mathematics. Attainment is highest for those who have been in the school throughout their education because of the on-going emphasis on improvement. In a Year 6 English lesson, for example, pupils' skills and understanding were extended by a continual promotion of better vocabulary and expressive language.
- Pupils are confident readers who read expressively and make effective use of strategies to link sounds with letters. Most pupils can talk about what they have read and how the story unfolds. Pupils recognise the purpose of punctuation and adjust their reading in response. More able pupils say they enjoy reading more than films because they can use their imagination.
- Pupils make good progress in almost all lessons because the work set is engaging and is generally appropriate to pupils' needs and abilities. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported through a wide variety of interventions in literacy and mathematics and a nurture group which supports emotionally vulnerable pupils. As a result, these pupils make similar progress to their peers. Pupils who arrive at different points during the school year are closely monitored so that teachers can meet their individual needs.
- Pupil premium funding has been used to provide small group interventions, booster clubs and breakfast and after school clubs to support families. It is carefully applied to support eligible pupils and is reviewed against impact and outcomes. Pupils eligible for this funding are currently two terms behind in English and mathematics and the gap is now closing steadily. Interventions are constantly refined. For example, the inclusion manager is working closely with colleagues to meet the specific needs of looked after children.
- The very small number of pupils who are educated off site make similar progress to their peers because the school checks regularly on their progress and ensures that the work they are doing

is appropriate to their needs.

- Pupils feel that they are making good progress because they are known as individuals and all have the same opportunities. They can explain how their work has improved. Parents and carers agree that their children are making good progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good overall and some is outstanding. A close focus on professional development and dialogue between teachers and with support staff has resulted in ambitious staff who all want to improve their skills. Staff have regular opportunities to share their teaching strengths with each other.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They plan well in most lessons to meet the needs of pupils with very varying abilities and make effective use of questions to assess pupils' understanding. In the best lessons, they use imaginative strategies to capture their interest, as in a Year 2 mathematics lesson where the teacher made pupils detectives who had to solve a code using division. As a result, pupils were eager to contribute and get on with the task.
- Lessons are often conducted at a good pace with approaches closely matched to the individual's ability but this close match was not found in the few lessons which required improvement. In these lessons, pupils were not sufficiently challenged by the work set, there was insufficient pace to ensure they made rapid progress and there were too few opportunities for them to present their findings or explain how they had reached their conclusions.
- Adults work closely in and out of lessons with pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, providing good support in one-to-one and small group sessions. As a result, pupils develop in confidence and build trusting relationships with adults.
- Reading is taught well and basic skills in linking sounds and letters are thoroughly covered and reinforced. Pupils have regular opportunities for guided reading and writing about the interesting themes and topics which emerge from their reading.
- Electronic technologies are well used to present ideas. In a Year 6 English lesson, the teacher's use of visual stimuli helped to build up a picture of how a gifted musician might feel on finding himself old and alone. The teacher encouraged pupils to describe the picture on screen. One pupil came up with 'once a happy man, now a broken vase filled with wilted flowers' and was happy to share this sensitive interpretation with fellow pupils.
- Literacy and numeracy are reinforced in other subjects, for example when teachers encourage the correct terminology in science lessons or when they ask pupils to work out co-ordinates in geography lessons.
- Teachers ensure pupils present their work neatly and marking is regular. Teachers set appropriate homework. Books show good evidence of progress over time. Pupils have good opportunities to assess their own work and that of their peers. However, spelling is inconsistently reinforced in teachers' marking and comments are not always linked to the targets set for individual pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good in and out of lessons. On the few occasions where examples of thoughtless behaviour occur, they are dealt with quickly. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. The school's comprehensive behaviour policy emphasises positive attitudes and the key rules of being gentle, kind, honest, listening to others and working hard. These attributes are reinforced through an effective rewards system, which pupils value greatly.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They have regular sessions in assemblies and class time on internet safety, and to make them aware of the dangers of drugs, smoking and alcohol. Close links with parents and carers, who agree that their children are safe, mean that any behavioural concerns are quickly followed up.
- Pupils say that there is very little bullying in the school and that it really amounts to no more than occasional name calling because, in the words of one pupil, 'we haven't learned to like people for who they are and their personality'. Pupils confirm that there is always an adult nearby to whom they can turn with any difficulties.
- Pupils have good, and regular, opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and the safety of others, for example, through membership of the school council and as mentors and corridor monitors.
- Attendance is low due to a few cases of persistent absence which the school is working steadily to address. The school offers sensitive support to individual families and those experiencing problems of any kind, and is doing everything possible to improve attendance in conjunction with the local authority. Absence is quickly followed up with calls home. Unauthorised absence rates are reducing. The best attendance results in weekly rewards. The breakfast club helps to get pupils into school by providing breakfast and a range of interesting activities.
- Fixed-term exclusions are slightly up on last year as a result of the refinement of school procedures. The school runs an effective 'time out' system at lunch times which works well to address the needs of pupils likely to engage in minor confrontations or to have behavioural issues with other children. Almost all pupils behave sensibly and work co-operatively with each other and adults. They are increasingly becoming good ambassadors for their school and the work it is doing to create a harmonious learning environment.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher has acted quickly to improve teaching and raise achievement. He has expanded his senior leadership team to bring in a variety of additional skills and is determined to improve the school and raise standards significantly. In this, he is supported by all staff.
- Senior leaders have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and learning. In joint observations with inspectors, all grades were agreed. Senior leaders observe lessons regularly and collect and analyse data at frequent intervals to confirm their perceptions. Pupils' progress is continually reviewed and targets set for staff to raise attainment levels.
- Subject leaders' roles have been more closely defined, with an emphasis on improving results and holding staff to account where any underperformance occurs. Training against national standards for subject leaders has been provided and enthusiastically taken up by many staff.

- Systems for managing the performance of staff are clear, consistent and rigorous with an on-going emphasis on development of skills. Promotion up the pay scales is carefully reviewed and the most effective teachers work closely with colleagues to improve teaching and learning.
- The range of subjects taught makes good use of the school's location, for example, with many outdoor activities, and there are good links with the neighbouring children's centre to provide practical, first-hand experience that is meaningful to pupils.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences are extremely well developed. The emphasis on 'hands on' experience and working together ensures outstanding opportunities for pupils to reflect and develop socially and morally and to develop their powers of imagination. Displays and project work confirm a keen interest in the world beyond the school gates. Links with other faiths and cultures are instrumental, through visitors, in broadening horizons. The school has good connections with France, South Africa, China and Australia.
- The local authority has light touch links with the school. It has worked closely with the school in the past to help raise achievement and develop teaching to its present levels.
- Safeguarding procedures meet all current requirements with regular staff training, including in safer recruitment and child protection.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is good. Governors visit the school regularly and the Chair has frequent contact with the headteacher, including by telephone. Governors are supportive of the school's work and ready to challenge it over standards, for example, when they insisted on earlier access to information on progress and attainment in order to become better informed. Governors are closely involved in procedures for the management of staff performance, know what is being done to improve teaching and are prepared to review progress up the pay scales, including how to reward the best teachers. They keep a close watch on effective use of pupil premium funding and understand how well this school is performing in relation to others because they have had training in analysis and use of data.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	114837
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	412939

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	566
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Don MacNab-Stark
Headteacher	Darren Woollard
Date of previous school inspection	02 February 2010
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