



Little Bloxwich CofE VC Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104222
Local Authority Walsall
Inspection number 286883
Inspection dates 15–16 November 2006
Reporting inspector Lois Furness

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Grenfell Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Little Bloxwich
Age range of pupils	4–11		Walsall WS3 3DL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01922 684301
Number on roll (school)	185	Fax number	01922 683627
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Kath Phillips
		Headteacher	Barbara Carter
Date of previous school inspection	19 March 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average size school serves an area of varying social and economic backgrounds. Most pupils come from a White British heritage with a few pupils coming from minority ethnic backgrounds. There is a below average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with some good features. Children in Reception get off to a good start and quickly settle into the school community. As part of the warm Christian ethos, there is a positive emphasis on caring for others. Older pupils talk about the need to care for younger ones, and to think of others less fortunate than themselves. Behaviour both around the school and in lessons is good. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and understand the need to lead a healthy lifestyle. Many make sensible choices at lunchtime, choosing fruit for their dessert, for example. The curriculum is satisfactory with a good range of enrichment activities, including visits, visitors and after school clubs. All of this results in pupils who are confident, keen to learn and well equipped for later life. As one pupil said, 'I enjoy lessons and learning new things.'

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Although pastoral care is good and pupils feel safe, knowing there is someone to speak to if they are concerned, academic guidance is not as secure. The new system of target setting and tracking progress is satisfactory. However, information is not up to date in all year groups; the use in planning of the information it produces is not consistent and is not shared enough with pupils so that they know how to improve. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported sensitively by teaching assistants and they make satisfactory progress.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory although there are some inconsistencies that lead to differences in pupils' achievement from year to year. There is good teaching in Years 5 and 6 and in these classes pupils learn well. By the time pupils leave in Year 6, standards are broadly average. Achievement in reading, mathematics and science is satisfactory. However, boys do not achieve as well as girls in English, and the teaching of writing skills from Reception to the end of Year 4 is not effective enough. It is too early for recent improvements to writing and strategies to boost boys' achievement to show full impact. Children in Reception generally achieve satisfactorily and reach most of their targets before they join Year 1.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has sound capacity for further improvement and has rectified the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection. Senior leaders and governors accurately identify areas where the school could be doing better. Subject leaders do not have sufficient responsibility for the quality of provision and achievement in their subjects. Plans for improvement do not always include the provision for Reception children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' skills in reading and writing from Reception to the end of Year 4, and of boys' skills in literacy throughout the school.
- Ensure subject leaders have responsibility for, and opportunities to monitor and evaluate, the quality of provision and achievement in all classes.

- Make sure that information gained from tracking all pupils' achievement is up to date, used by staff in planning, and shared consistently with pupils so that they know how to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Children entering the school in Reception have skills below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. By the time they enter Year 1 the majority of children reach their targets, although they have marked weaknesses in their knowledge of the names and sounds of letters and in writing. Because of these weaknesses, pupils in Years 1 and 2 have considerable ground to catch up in literacy. Standards at the end of Year 2 are broadly average in reading and mathematics and below average in writing. Achievement in writing is slowed because improvements to the teaching of writing skills are inconsistent from Reception to the end of Year 4. In Years 5 and 6 good teaching enables pupils to attain broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science, but boys do not achieve as well as girls in reading and writing throughout the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Their cultural development is satisfactory because, although pupils have a good understanding of the arts and local culture, their understanding of the cultural diversity of modern Britain is more limited. Throughout the school, pupils behave well and are enthusiastic about learning. Attendance is satisfactory and pupils are punctual for school.

Older pupils show considerable maturity when discussing healthy lifestyles and know that exercise is good for them. They know the need to eat fruit and vegetables, and make sensible eating choices from the good range of healthy options available at lunchtime. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to school life; they take on responsibilities willingly and conscientiously. The older pupils enjoy caring for the younger ones and some pupils say that they would like to do more for Reception children, supporting them in play activities for example. They are aware of the needs of the wider community, and they readily take part in fund raising for charity. Pupils are prepared soundly for life outside school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The best teaching is in Years 5 and 6. Teachers manage behaviour well by correcting pupils in a way that does not interrupt the flow of the lesson. Years 3 and 4 pupils say, 'The teachers are always very fair.' Teaching assistants are used effectively, often supporting small groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Good use of resources, including the newly purchased interactive whiteboards, helps to bring learning alive.

In English, new ways of teaching writing have been introduced, although this is not yet consistent through the school. Not all teachers encourage independent learning and pupils in Years 1 to 4 are often over-reliant on teachers to guide them. For example, there is limited use of self-assessment, and not all pupils are clear about what their short-term targets are.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is broad and balanced although there is insufficient focus on the development of writing skills across all subjects. Many pupils attend and enjoy a wide range of sports, musical and information and communication technology (ICT) activities. Regular visits to places of educational interest, such as a local leather museum, art gallery and the cathedral, trigger pupils' curiosity and help to make learning more relevant. There is good provision for personal, social and health education with pupils following a thoughtfully planned scheme. As a result, they understand how to keep healthy and safe.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The provision for ensuring pupils' safety and welfare is satisfactory, although risk assessments are sometimes completed in an informal way rather than through the use of systematic checks that provide a clear record. Sensitive arrangements for pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities help them to feel valued and give them greater confidence to learn. Child protection procedures are effective and there are good links with support agencies. Pupils say they feel safe; they trust adults and there is someone to talk to if they have a concern.

Tracking and target-setting systems are improving but not all teachers have the information necessary to track progress fully and give pupils clear guidance on how to improve. Individual targets are shared with pupils in English, but this does not always happen in mathematics or science.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

School leaders are committed to school improvement and regularly review its performance. However, the monitoring and evaluation of action to secure improvement is not sharp enough and does not involve all staff. When initiatives to improve the quality of provision and achievement are introduced, the school does not always include Reception. The headteacher leads the school soundly and has worked successfully with governors and other staff to bring improvements. For example, the school works well with parents and external agencies in order to ensure pupils' well-being. Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses and are influential in decision making. The school has satisfactory capacity to continue its future improvement.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming us into your school a few days ago. You were most helpful when talking to us and we enjoyed finding out about how well you learn. We think that your school is a satisfactory school with some good features.

The things that we particularly liked about your school

- By the time you leave school, most of you are working at the levels expected for your age in English, mathematics and science and you make satisfactory progress.
- You enjoy learning and you say that lessons are interesting.
- The youngest children in Reception settle quickly into school.
- Your behaviour is good and you are always willing to help each other.
- It was good to see so many of you choosing to eat fruit at lunchtime showing you know the importance of eating healthily.
- You say you feel safe in school and adults will always listen if you are unhappy or upset.
- Many of you attend the good range of after school clubs.
- Teaching is satisfactory and the teaching assistants are good at helping those of you who do not find learning easy.
- Your headteacher, governors and senior staff know what needs to be done to make the school a better place to be.

What we have asked the school to do now

- Your teachers should help those of you in Reception and Years 1 to 4 to improve your reading and writing skills. We also think that all the boys should be helped to do better in English.
- There should be more checks made on how well you are learning, so that things that are working well can be shared with everyone.
- We think your teachers should do more to help you to understand how you can improve your work.

We hope you continue to work hard and enjoy your time in school.