

Blackfell Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108833
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	288201
Inspection date	9 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Clive Petts

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 on roll	
School	237
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Wendy Young
Headteacher	Mrs Connie Megginson
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2001
School address	Knoulberry Blackfell Washington Tyne and Wear NE37 1HA
Telephone number	0191 2193670
Fax number	0191 2193671

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is an average size primary school which serves an area with a varied socio- economic character. Nearly all pupils speak English as their first language and almost all come from White British backgrounds. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school has a private nursery on site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is an effective and inclusive school which provides pupils with a good education. Pupils' personal development and the curriculum are excellent. The school makes certain that all pupils enjoy learning, do as well as they can, feel safe and secure and are aware of the value of keeping healthy and adopting safe lifestyles. As a consequence the school enjoys high levels of support and confidence from parents. A parent summarises it well as 'a happy, caring school which offers many opportunities beyond the curriculum'. Pupils say they feel secure at school and are confident to approach staff if they have a worry or concern.

Children start school with a below average range of skills. As a result of challenging teaching with a firm focus on achievement, pupils make good progress throughout the school. Data shows an improving trend in achievement over recent years, and standards are typically above average; however, test results in 2006 revealed a dip in standards for that year, particularly for boys, an issue which the school has addressed. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning help to ensure that above average standards are reached by most pupils by the end of Year 6. The excellent provision in the remodelled Foundation Stage area provides all pupils with essential language skills, which gives them confidence to make steady progress in all areas of learning. By the end of Year 2, assessments show a pattern of good achievement. Although most pupils do well in reading and writing, a small number of boys do not achieve as well as they could in writing. As a result of good and often outstanding teaching, pupil interest is captured often through the use of practical approaches which excite and motivate pupils. This ensures that their learning is secure. Thorough assessment and the process of setting targets help pupils focus on exactly what they need to improve and learn next, although not all lessons include opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own work.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides strong leadership in the pursuit of high standards. An exciting, challenging vision for the future of the school has been established. Staff and governors support the headteacher's ambitions for the school by following her lead, extending their own skills and setting high expectations for their own work. Together, senior managers and the headteacher are a strength of the school. New staff are very effectively supported so that they quickly 'rise to the challenge'. Governors give good support to the school. Their developing knowledge of what the school does well is providing them with the confidence and ability not only to actively hold the school to account but also recognise what needs to be developed. The school has progressed well since the last inspection, offers good value for money and a good capacity to continue to move forward.

What the school should do to improve further

- Consolidate improvements in boys' achievement to ensure that standards rise at the end of Key Stage 2.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. Children enter nursery with weaknesses in listening and speaking, but make good progress in all learning areas. As a consequence, children do much better in most areas of learning than expected for their age by the time they enter Year 1. Results in 2006 assessments reveal that nearly all pupils in Year 1 and 2 make good progress. At the end of Year 6, results in the 2006 national tests revealed a dip in the trend of improving standards.

This was due to a large number of boys in the group, a number of whom have special educational needs and a history of underachievement and disaffection. As a result, standards were marginally below average in mathematics and science and in English were well below average. Boys' standards were exceptionally low. Strategies introduced to improve boys' achievement and raise standards in writing and mathematics are very successfully reversing last year's dip. Boys' achievement is improving speedily and catching up with that of girls. Inspection evidence reveals above average standards with everyone achieving well. The overall progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly in line with others. This is the result of imaginative, often inspiring teaching with consistent use of assessment to provide pupils with good guidance. This is evidenced in work seen in lessons and confirmed by the school's rigorous monitoring and tracking of performance.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their excellent attendance reflects the high level of enjoyment of learning throughout the school day. Parents recognise that their children leave and arrive home happy. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and guides pupils to behave exceptionally well and show considerate and helpful attitudes. School council members value the opportunities they have to make positive contributions, for example, taking responsibility for monitoring the Friendship Stop at playtime. In discussions they take pride in their involvement in the redesign of outdoor areas. Pupils have a very good range of opportunities to contribute to community life, for example, working with a local pensioner group at Christmas and joining in with musical events at the local secondary school. They gain an understanding of different cultures through international links with Ghana and Holland. Their sound and strengthening basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), positive attitudes to learning and residential experiences prepare them well for later study and work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good and often outstanding teaching ensures that pupils make good progress throughout the school. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and are founded on much mutual respect. Teachers take great care to include all pupils when managing classroom activities and asking questions. In outstanding lessons, imaginative approaches inspire pupils to apply their learning accurately to solve problems. In the Foundation Stage adaptation of existing teaching spaces has created stimulating and discrete learning areas. This, coupled with a new assessment programme, has enabled a firm focus to be successfully maintained on achievement in vital areas, for example, communication skills. Systematic use of assessment together with careful planning ensures that each pupil's needs are met. Increasingly, progress is now more consistent and even across all groups of pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides an excellent curriculum. An exceptional range of enrichment activities broadens pupils learning experiences and develops their personal qualities very well. Participation

rates are high and pupils appreciate the specialist opportunities they have to add to their skills, for example, attending tennis coaching. Pupils learn effectively through a well thought out programme of visits and visitors. The school strives to ensure that creative arts options capture interest and talents and provides the motivation to continue, for example, playing a musical instrument. Increasingly ICT is used to enhance the quality of pupils' work, and residential experiences at outdoor centres are an established part of learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils receive very good quality care and support from all staff. Much care has been taken to ensure that learning environments are not only safe and secure but stimulating and lively. The early identification of need in the Foundation Stage reflects a total commitment to meeting the needs of individual pupils. Equally, transition to secondary school is handled very sensitively. All of this is recognised and valued by parents. Very good links with outside agencies make a positive contribution to the care pupils receive. Rigorous monitoring and tracking of pupils' performance are in place. Progress is now reviewed regularly so that those falling behind can be quickly identified and action taken to boost progress. Pupils are developing the skill to recognise what they have to do to progress to the next level. This is an emerging strength in the drive to raise boys' achievement. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are in place and staff are aware of their responsibilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The excellent vision and drive of the headteacher has helped to ensure that the school has moved forward significantly in the last two years. Effective management from a hard working and committed team of staff plays an important part establishing positive climate for learning in which all pupils can thrive. Their effectiveness is seen in the exciting modernisation of the Foundation Stage and the more consistent use of data to carefully monitor pupil progress. The school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. As a result of whole-school action, boys' achievement and writing skills are improving quickly. Governance of the school is good and improving as they increasingly hold the school to account. School self-evaluation is accurate and reliable although cautious when judging the impact of the Foundation Stage provision.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

10 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Blackfell Primary School, Tyne and Wear, NE37 1HA

Thank you for the very friendly welcome to your school and for being so polite and helpful when you met with me. I had a very busy day and thoroughly enjoyed talking to you about your work, speaking with your headteacher and staff and joining you in lessons. You go to a good school and these are some of the things I found:

- the enthusiastic way which your headteacher is improving the school for your benefit
- the way you enjoy your lessons, are really keen to learn and are very happy to attend school every day
- the way your teachers make sure you all do as well as you can to reach high standards
- your knowledge of how to lead healthy lives and stay safe
- the excellent opportunities provided in your lessons and after school to help learn and improve your skills
- the excellent quality and standards in the Nursery and Reception classes.

The headteacher and staff know what they have to do to make sure you continue to be a good and improving school so I have asked the headteacher to continue her excellent work with full support from all of the staff. You can play your part by continuing to do your best and particularly at Key Stage 2 working hard to make sure standards rise.

I wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Clive Petts

Lead inspector