



Blenheim Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114837
Local Authority SOUTHEND-ON-SEA
Inspection number 290052
Inspection date 20 November 2006
Reporting inspector Cheryl Thompson

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

The inspection of the day care was carried out under Children Act 1989: Part XA (as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000) and, where (funded) nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Blenheim Chase
School category	Community		Leigh-on-sea
Age range of pupils	3-11		Essex SS9 4HX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01702 474684
Number on roll (school)	434	Fax number	01702 470305
Number on roll (day care)	38	Chair	Mr Albert Smulian
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Headteacher	Mrs Marianne Turner
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2001		
Date of previous day care inspection	3 February 2006		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
3-11	20 November 2006	290052

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Blenheim Primary is much bigger than most primary schools. The great majority of pupils are White British with a small number of minority ethnic pupils, some of whom are at the early stages of learning English. There is a higher than average turnover of pupils. The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals and who have learning difficulties or disabilities are much higher than found nationally. The school has a successful 'nurture unit' for up to ten pupils. It provides them with specialised support to help them overcome a variety of needs so that they can eventually integrate into mainstream school. Attainment on entry to the Nursery is wide ranging with small numbers of more able children but, in the main, attainment is well below the levels typical for children of this age.

The school has the following nationally recognised awards - Advanced Healthy Schools Award, Active Sports Mark, Ecological Award (bronze and silver), The Arts Mark, ICT Quality Mark, the Inclusion Quality Mark, Investors in People, Basic Skills Mark and the Commission for Racial Equality Standard. It is one of three schools in Southend who are a Full Service Extended School.

A breakfast, after school club and creche are run by the governors of the school. Breakfast club runs from 07.30 till 08.50. The after school club takes place from 15.15 till 18.00. A creche is available whenever courses are running in the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Blenheim Primary is a good school. Some aspects of its work have outstanding features. Parents and pupils are very pleased with all it has to offer. Leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The key to the school's continued success is the headteacher's clear and determined vision that each child, regardless of their starting point, can achieve their best. The senior leadership team work together very efficiently to monitor and evaluate the quality of education the school provides to ensure this vision is met. The excellent system for tracking pupils' progress is used very effectively to guide teaching and set challenging targets for all pupils. Consequently, pupils of all abilities and those for whom English is an additional language achieve well academically. Standards are average although the school recognises that more pupils should be attaining the higher Level 5 in writing. Standards in handwriting are not good enough and do not always reflect pupils' ability.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Behaviour is excellent. They have very positive attitudes to learning and are kind and respectful to one another. Their involvement in such schemes as the Eco Project gives a wider perspective on issues such as re-cycling and water conservation. They develop a good understanding of being part of their class community through mottos such as 'Crocodiles snap up learning' and 'Joeys leap for learning'. Their increasing success in sporting events shows they also work well in teams. These qualities, together with their adequate skills in literacy and numeracy, prepare them well for their future. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception classes) is good. A strong feature is teachers' emphasis on helping children to develop a wide vocabulary and good speaking and listening skills. Standards are below those typical for the Reception age group.

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for its pupils. Even though this is a large school, each pupil and their family is known well. Pupils say they feel safe and happy in school and know that if they have any concerns, staff will 'sort them out'. The 'nurture unit' is very effective in helping pupils overcome barriers to learning so that they can join the mainstream classes. Through the school's good programme of personal, social and health education, pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and eat a healthy diet. They undertake their responsibilities conscientiously. The school council and older pupils, particularly, make a very good contribution to the school and local community.

The school's mission statement 'Working together, learning together', is met extremely well and extends very effectively beyond the school to the community. Teachers work very well together as a team so that teaching and learning are consistently good across the school. Lessons move along at a brisk pace and work is set at just the right level to ensure all succeed. Proficient teaching assistants and learning mentors provide very effective support for learning. Relevant links between subjects, and an exceptional range of clubs and sporting activities contribute towards the good curriculum.

Even though the last inspection judged Blenheim to be a 'very good school', there has been no complacency. Self-evaluation and the resulting improvement planning is

excellent. Standards have improved considerably and continue to rise. The school provides good value for money and has an excellent capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further in writing, handwriting and presentation.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils of all abilities, including those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress and achieve well. Pupils who have learning difficulties have their needs identified quickly and receive good support so that they, too, achieve well and have good self-esteem. Pupils who are identified as gifted or talented also thrive because there are opportunities for younger pupils to work with older pupils and Year 6 pupils may attend lessons at local high schools. The school's data shows clearly that pupils who have always attended Blenheim make better and more consistent progress than those who join the school in various year groups. Pupils in the 'nurture unit' make very good progress in developing their personal qualities and basic skills so that they can settle happily and cope in mainstream classes. Standards at Year 2 and Year 6 are within the average range. From low starting points on entry to the nursery, children make good progress through the Foundation Stage so that by the time they start in Year 1, their attainment is only just below that expected for their age. Continued good progress through the school sees pupils attaining just above average standards in English, mathematics and science although the school recognises that more needs to be done to help pupils attain the higher Level 5 in English. The school's assessment data and pupils' work show that they have good skills in information and communication technology and make good use of them in a range of subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils say they love coming to school and that 'It's a friendly place to be'. This is reflected in their regular attendance, very good attitudes to work and excellent behaviour. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. During lessons observed, pupils' contributions to discussions relating to the national 'Anti-bullying week' demonstrated a very good understanding of the feelings of others and the 'right' way to behave. Pupils make a very positive contribution to the school community, for example by raising funds for playground equipment and in re-developing the school grounds and making a sensory garden. In the wider community, for the past three years, the school has won the school's section of 'Southend in Bloom'. The Eco Project and the gardening club have given pupils the opportunity to develop a very good understanding of growing food and the need for sustainability.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school is correct in its judgement that teaching and learning are good. An obvious feature in all the teaching observed was teachers' confidence in providing lively and interesting learning opportunities. The school's focus on recognising pupils' differing learning styles has ensured good lessons at a brisk pace. Pupils are not expected to sit and listen for too long, they have visual prompts and practical tasks to reinforce learning. Pupils experiencing difficulty are quickly noted and accurate diagnoses made of their learning needs.

Within a framework of excellent relationships, teachers set very high expectations for behaviour and application to work which pupils are only too ready to meet. They are not yet expecting enough of pupils in the way they present their work. Teachers make skilled use of assessment and tracking information to make sure pupils have the right level of challenge and/or support in their work. Pupils for whom English is an additional language have good support, often in their home language which they are encouraged to use. This earns great respect from their class mates for being able to speak two or more languages.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and enriched with a very good range of visits and visitors so that it meets pupils' needs very well. Good links are made between subjects such as history and English to provide meaningful learning opportunities. There is a notable range of clubs which are very well attended. The school is successful in various inter-school competitive sports competitions.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support is outstanding and is central to pupils' excellent personal development and good achievement. All staff treat pupils with kindness and respect. Pupils greatly appreciate the support provided by learning mentors. A huge part of the school's success is the strong link with parents and the support given to them to help their children succeed. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are thorough and comply with the latest government requirements. The school's excellent system for assessment and tracking pupils' progress is used extremely well to make sure they are helped to make good progress. For example, if a pupil is not making the expected progress in reading, they will have extra help either individually or in a small group. If a pupil shows an aptitude or talent for a particular subject, there will be many extension challenges on offer. The school has very effective links with outside agencies such as speech therapists, if extra advice is needed to help an individual.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher's drive to provide a first class education for all pupils and to put the school at the centre of its community shines through all its work. The senior leadership team provide excellent role models through their own teaching. They are well-equipped to monitor teaching throughout the school and support teachers if improvement or help is needed. A key feature of the senior team is their excellent analysis of data, use of evaluations and consideration of the views of pupils, parents and staff. These evaluations are used to plan for improvement so that all stakeholders in the school feel valued and involved. Governors are knowledgeable and act confidently as a critical friend to the school. There is a very strong commitment to making sure teachers have good opportunities to extend their skills and knowledge. Subject leaders are encouraged and supported to develop their roles. Consequently, teachers are confident, are always seeking to improve their practice and are knowledgeable leaders. The school works extremely well with parents to support their children as well as providing opportunities for parents to learn new skills.

Effectiveness of registered day care

Grade: 2

Blenheim before and after school clubs and creche provides good quality child care. Children feel secure and are well behaved because they are cared for by familiar staff, who offer positive and thoughtful support. A good range of play equipment and activities are available for use during the creche. Staff provide a suitable range of activities during the before and after school clubs, such as making posters. Children are expected to use their independence and may choose to participate in the planned activity or not. However, activities on offer are rather limiting and so this restricts children's choices. Children enjoy playing active games because interesting equipment has been purchased to play with, for instance, bean bags. Sessions are planned for each week which allow children to learn satisfactorily through practical activities but planning does not consistently explain specific outcomes for children. Staff do effectively plan activities to develop children's understanding of other cultures. The environment is clean and welcoming but there is no relaxing seating area where children can read books in the breakfast and after school clubs. Children are provided with fresh fruit and healthy breakfasts and snacks including a drink.

Children are safely escorted to the clubs. The premises and play area are secure. Most staff hold an up to date first aid qualification. Two members of staff have a level 3 qualification and she works mostly in the creche. Two other members of staff who work in the breakfast and after school club have level 2 qualifications and one of those is working towards her level 3 qualification. Good improvement since the last inspection means policies have been reviewed and staff are clear about what to do in all situations. Staff understand the policy for child protection and know how an accusation about a member of staff would be handled. Staff tell parents about accidents and get parents to sign the accident record. Staff and parents are satisfactorily aware of the procedures

to be followed if there is a complaint. Children know how to safely evacuate the premises and fire drills are always recorded. A good partnership with parents is in place. An informative admissions policy is signed by parents before children start. Staff are always available at the beginning and end of sessions to talk to parents.

Recommendations or actions to improve the registered day care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take into account the following recommendations.

During breakfast and after school activity sessions:

- Improve provision for children who wish to relax in a quiet area.
- Review the range of play and learning opportunities so that children have as much choice as possible.

Since the last inspection in February 2005 there have been no complaints about the registered day care that required Ofsted or the school to take action so that the day care continued to meet the National Standards. The school is required to keep a record of complaints about the registered day care made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints about the registered day care other than those made to Ofsted.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

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

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
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	3
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	3
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	1

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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

The effectiveness of the registered day care

The quality and standards of the registered day care	2
How effective is the day care in helping children to be healthy?	2
How effective is the day care in protecting children and helping them to stay safe?	3
How effective is the day care in helping children to achieve and enjoy their learning?	3
How effective is the day care in helping children to make a positive contribution?	2
How effectively is the day care organised?	2
Does the day care meet the needs of the range of children for whom it provides?	Yes
Has the day care improved since the last inspection?	Yes
Does the day care require enforcement action?	No
Does the day care require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

21 November 2006

Dear Children

Blenheim Primary School, School Way, Blenheim Chase, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, SS9 4HX

Thank you all for welcoming me to your school and being so friendly and helpful. I was very impressed with your good manners.

I think you go to a good school. When I visited classrooms and watched you at play, I could see how much you enjoyed being there. You are right, it is a friendly place to be. I was impressed by how well the school council is organised and how you work together to raise money for things - I hope the next cake sale was successful.

I noticed that all the staff know you very well and take good care of you and that they like to talk to your parents about how you are getting on. You told me that lessons are fun and that you think you have to work hard most of the time. In the classes I visited, I saw how your teachers had prepared interesting lessons and help you get on well. I thought you worked hard and your behaviour was excellent - well done. When I was in lessons I looked at some of your books and I thought your handwriting could be improved and some of you need to make your work tidier. Please could you try harder to make your work neater?

Mrs Turner and the senior teachers are doing an excellent job running the school. They keep a very good eye on all that goes on and are always working to make sure your school is an interesting place to be.

Thank you again for all your helpfulness.

All good wishes

Cheryl Thompson

Lead inspector