

Blenheim Primary School and Children's Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114837
Local Authority	Southend
Inspection number	338461
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Julie Winyard HMI

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

The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	456
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr C Mallam
Headteacher	Mrs Marianne Turner
Date of previous school inspection	0 November 2006
School address	School Way Blenheim Close Leigh-on-Sea
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Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2010
Inspection number	338461

Registered childcare provision	Mrs Marianne Turner
Number of children on roll in the registered childcare provision	110
Date of last inspection of registered childcare provision	Not previously inspected

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 21 lessons seeing 19 teachers and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. The majority of the inspection was spent observing learning. Inspectors spoke with a small number of parents on the playground and in meetings. They observed the school's work and looked at lesson plans, details of pupils' progress and a range of documentation. Seventy nine parental questionnaires were scrutinised along with 101 pupils' questionnaires and 39 staff questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how quickly the school identifies individuals and groups of pupils who are underachieving and whether the support given is rigorously monitored to ensure pupils are making sufficient progress
- the impact of the care, guidance and support the school provides on pupils' attainment and progress
- the impact of leadership and management at all levels in raising the achievement of all pupils and on improving their attendance.

Information about the school

Blenheim Primary School and Children's Centre is much larger than average and serves an area that experiences social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average as is the percentage of those identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are smaller numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups and for whom English is an additional language than is found nationally. The school's accommodation is housed in two adjacent buildings. The school's extensive grounds provide a range of outdoor activities including an allotment. The recently opened children's centre is a short walk from the school. The nursery there was inspected in June 2009 therefore was not inspected again with the school. The school holds a number of awards. The breakfast club and after-school club are managed by the governing body and were visited as part of the inspection.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good and rapidly improving school with outstanding features particularly in the care of pupils and their personal development. One pupil commented, 'I love my life at school because they make me feel so safe!'

Pupils' achievement is good. Children enter the Nursery with skills and knowledge which are well below those expected for children of their age. Throughout their time at school, pupils make good progress, given their starting points, and they leave at the end of Year 6 with standards that are above national averages. However, this good rate of progress is not sustained through Key Stage 1 because the quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 has been variable in previous years. This resulted in standards being significantly below average at the end of Year 2 in 2009. During the inspection most teaching seen in Key Stage 1 was good or better and current improvements are already having an impact on pupils' improving attainment and progress including that of more able pupils. However, the additional support given to pupils who are not achieving as well as they could be, is not monitored frequently enough to ensure that they are making sufficient progress. There is some outstanding teaching throughout the school and senior leaders are beginning to use these examples to ensure that all teaching is good or better especially in Key Stage 1.

The curriculum is outstanding because it is highly relevant to pupils' needs and interests. This is reflected in the pupils' great enjoyment of all their lessons. Pupils' learning is enriched by many out-of-school clubs and a wide range of visits and visitors. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a tool to broaden the curriculum and support pupils' learning is excellent.

Pupils' spiritual development is good and their moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. There is a very strong ethos of respect, tolerance and care throughout the school which results in pupils' outstanding behaviour in lessons, around the school and on the playground. One pupil said, 'There would be no structure to life without rules.' Pupils readily take on a range of responsibilities and are very keen to 'apply' for jobs for example as helpers to school office staff.

Pupils of all backgrounds and abilities receive excellent care and support. This is built on robust, well-planned policies and procedures and the strong commitment of all adults including learning mentors and support staff. Although the majority of pupils have good attendance, there remains a very small minority who do not attend school as often as they could. Consequently the school's overall attendance is low. The school is doing everything in its power to address this, for example the before-school club, and is working very effectively with the local authority. The school has outstanding

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relationships with support services of every kind and these are being strengthened further through the work of the children's centre. The welfare of all pupils is paramount and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable are extremely well supported which results in their outstanding personal development. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well and make good progress.

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher, who is well supported by the good leadership team and governors, has ensured the relentless pursuit of high standards and the excellent provision for the care of all pupils. The school evaluated itself as outstanding overall and whilst inspectors judge this to be the case in some aspects of its work, due to the past lack of progress through Key Stage 1, inspectors judge overall effectiveness currently to be good. Staff morale is very high and all share the ambition and aspirations of the headteacher and leadership team. The school has made good improvement since the last inspection and is well placed to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards and improve progress at Key Stage 1 by:
 - effectively using the examples of outstanding practice to ensure that all teaching in this key stage is consistently good or better
 - carefully monitoring all additional support at least every half term to ensure that pupils receiving this support are making sufficient progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Attainment at the end of Year 6 has improved since the last inspection when it was judged to be satisfactory overall. It has also improved since the survey inspection, just over a year ago, when most pupils were judged to reach standards in line with the national average by the age of 11. In 2009 all groups of Year 6 pupils attained standards that were significantly above average in English, mathematics and science. Attainment in Key Stage 1 has been below average for the last three years and dipped to significantly below average in 2009. The school has acted swiftly to address this and the school's own data and inspection evidence indicate that attainment is improving with more pupils well placed to achieve average standards by the end of Year 2 than last year. Progress is also improving for most groups of pupils including more able pupils. Progress over the last three years for all pupils in Key Stage 2 has been significantly above average.

The overwhelming majority of pupils who completed the pupil questionnaire say they enjoy school. Many report that lessons are 'fun and interesting' and one pupil says, 'This school is one of a kind! It's a creative, enjoyable school that helps children to learn in many kinds of ways.' Another says, 'It is a delight to learn here!' This enjoyment is evident in all lessons seen during the inspection. Whilst the vast majority of pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education due to their good basic skills, some are not so well prepared due to low attendance.

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The pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community because they are thrilled to be part of bodies like the school or ECO council. They enjoy the many clubs which they describe as 'brilliant'. They have good opportunities to join with pupils from other local schools as part of shared international days.

Pupils have an outstanding understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle speaking with great confidence about making healthy choices.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

All teachers plan lessons effectively and in most lessons assessment is used well, catering for the learning needs of different groups of pupils. When teaching is outstanding, lessons have an appropriate pace which matches the pupils' ability to learn. Activities are exciting. For example, in a very engaging English lesson, acting out the story of a fearsome pirate captain resulted in outstanding independent writing. Teachers encourage pupils to talk to a partner about their ideas and pupils enthusiastically exchange their views before sharing these with the rest of the class. Teachers' have very high expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour and questions are very well

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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directed and encourage pupils to think carefully and extend their learning. Teaching assistants are deployed very effectively at all times in the lessons. Where teaching is less effective, pupils do not make as much progress as they could because activities are not always well matched to their learning needs.

Teachers' use of assessment is well developed in Key Stage 2. Written marking in pupils' books is outstanding because pupils are given the advice they need to improve their work further and they are given time in lessons to do this. This type of feedback is currently being developed in Key Stage 1 but has not yet had sufficient time to have an impact on raising attainment and improving progress. Pupils are able to evaluate their own work and Year 6 pupils talk confidently about the level they are working at and what level they would like to achieve. Learning targets are not always used consistently because pupils are not clear when they have achieved a target or when they might get a new one.

The curriculum is extremely well matched to pupils' interests. Because of pupils' need to develop basic skills, there is a strong and appropriate emphasis on English and mathematics. Good links are made between subjects so that pupils are given excellent opportunities to use their basic skills. Pupils are extremely pleased with the range of visits and visitors; for example, 'the cool trips like Southend Marine Activity Centre.'

The care, guidance and support pupils receive are strengths of the school. The school manages movement between the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and between Year 6 and the next stage of education exceptionally well. Pupils are confident and quickly settle into new classes and new situations. Strategies to support particular groups who exhibit challenging behaviour is extremely effective and pupils greatly value the support they receive from learning mentors and counsellors. The before- and after-school clubs provide a good level of supervision and activities for pupils who attend.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leadership team work well together to evaluate the work of the school and to ensure actions are put in place to make necessary improvements. However, in some cases their evaluation is not sufficiently incisive. For example, they have not picked up quickly enough that some pupils are not making as rapid progress as they could in Key Stage 1 even though they are receiving additional support. A very

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experienced Key Stage 1 teacher has been appointed to lead this part of the school. The action she has taken is already having an impact on raising attainment and improving progress for these pupils. Governors know the school well and provide good challenge as well as supporting senior leaders. They are keen to ensure that all initiatives are effective and add value to pupils' learning. There is good management of the before- and after-school clubs.

There are excellent partnerships with parents and this is beginning to have an impact on attendance figures which are beginning to improve. One parent talked about the school's excellent approach to developing such relationships as 'the Blenheim experience.' The overwhelming majority of parents are extremely supportive of the school. Provision for community cohesion is strong through all aspects of the school's work. It underpins the school's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity and the eradication of any form of discrimination. The school is vigilant in ensuring the safety and welfare of its pupils. Its safeguarding procedures are followed rigorously both in school and in the before- and after-school clubs. They meet current requirements well.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes from very low starting points and, by the start of Year 1, are working below average levels. Provision in all classes is good and there is a good balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities. Children work and play with great enjoyment and enthusiasm. For example, one group of children invited inspectors to feel the temperature of the water in the

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water tray outside and explained that it would feel cold! Good use is made of the extensive outside area; however, a lack of equipment restricts children's physical development. Teaching is good overall but there is some variation between classes. The best teaching matches activities extremely well to all children's stages of development and adults know exactly when to intervene in order to move learning forward. Where teaching is less effective, child-initiated activities are not supported with possible questions adults could ask when joining the children's play. Routines such as healthy eating are established well. Children's safety is paramount and they receive excellent care. There are excellent relationships with parents and these have been enhanced recently by the work of the children's centre. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader was appointed in September 2008 and she has a good understanding of the quality of provision and how to develop this further.

There is good care and provision in the before and after school clubs. There is a pleasant learning environment with a stimulating range of resources to support the different areas of learning. There is good access to the outdoor area. There is good attention to children's health and safety with nourishing food provided for those who would like it. Parents value the club and say their children enjoy it. The club is led and managed well.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of the 79 questionnaires returned from parents and carers were very positive about the school. Parents and carers are particularly pleased with leadership and management, the good teaching, the progress made by their children and the way the school keeps their children safe.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Blenheim Primary School and Children's Centre to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 79 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 456 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	54	68	25	32	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	59	75	17	22	3	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	48	61	29	37	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	54	68	24	30	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	54	68	25	32	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	57	72	21	27	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	54	35	44	0	0	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	42	53	30	38	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	51	65	27	34	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	38	48	34	43	3	4	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	51	34	43	3	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	57	72	19	24	2	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	61	77	17	22	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for 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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



4 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blenheim Primary School and Children's Centre, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 4HX

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave to me and my inspector colleagues when we visited your school this week. We all enjoyed visiting your lessons and talking with you about your school. It was great to hear how much you like coming to school and thank you to all those who completed questionnaires and talked to us in meetings. I really enjoyed reading your ideas and hearing you talk about your school and have included some of your comments in the report.

We agree with you that Blenheim is a good school with good and sometimes outstanding teaching. The headteacher and all the staff care for you extremely well. Because you like your school and your teachers so much, your behaviour is excellent and we were very impressed with the way you opened doors for us and greeted us cheerily every morning or when we saw you in the corridors. The staff do an excellent job supporting your learning and we were very pleased to see so many of you making such good progress especially in Key Stage 2.

There are a few ways in which you can help your school to be even better. We would like to see you working even harder in Key Stage 1 so that you make just as good progress here as when you are in Key Stage 2. We have given the school some pointers as to how to help you achieve this which are:

- help every teacher to be an excellent teacher by sharing ideas together of how to make every lesson the best it can be
- check that you are making good progress in the special groups where you get extra help with learning.

Thank you again for a very enjoyable and interesting two days at Blenheim.

With every good wish for your future lives,

Yours sincerely

Julie Winyard

Her Majesty's Inspector

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