

Blackwell First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116665
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	358002
Inspection dates	26–27 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Clive Lewis

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	105
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lesley Penfold
Headteacher	Anna Moss
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed eight lessons taught by four teachers and held meetings with groups of pupils, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, including a sample of pupils' books, teachers' planning documents, and tracking and assessment data. Inspectors analysed questionnaires from 68 parents and carers, 38 pupils and eight staff.

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

- Is the quality of teaching good across the school?
- What are the quality and rigour of the school's new tracking and assessment systems?
- What impact have subject managers and curriculum coordinators had on teaching and learning?

Information about the school

This is a very small school situated in a semi-rural village, although half of its pupils come from outside the catchment area. Pupils are taught in four classes, one Reception and three mixed-age classes. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much lower than average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average and no pupils are believed to have English as a second language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly in line with national averages. The majority of pupils on the special needs register have moderate learning difficulties. Almost no pupil has a statement of special educational needs. The school has gained the Healthy Schools award, the information and communication technology (ICT) mark and a Leading Aspect Award for curriculum innovation.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Blackwell First is an outstanding school. It has improved significantly since the last inspection and continues to do so under the strong and dedicated leadership of the headteacher. She provides a very clear sense of purpose and direction, closely linked to school improvement. Her effective leadership has ensured that teaching and learning have improved and clear priorities have been set for further improvement. The excellent teamwork and the driving ambition of the whole staff are central to the school's improvement since the last inspection and its continuing success. Subject coordinators for the 'core' subjects of literacy and mathematics have overseen clear improvements in their areas of responsibility although coordinators of the other subjects have not yet had time to gain a good overview of their subject area. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were extremely supportive of the school. Typical comments included, 'We are delighted with the progress our child has made at the school and our child is always happy to go to school,' and, 'It feels like one big family in one big house!'

Pupils achieve well. Most children start in the Reception class with skills that are above average for their age. By the time they leave the school, all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities have made good progress and overall standards are significantly above the national average. Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teaching is good and is a strong contributory factor in pupils' good progress. Parents and carers say their children enjoy coming to school and pupils agree enthusiastically. Pupils display very positive attitudes to their learning, as evidenced in their excellent levels of attendance, and their exemplary behaviour in lessons and around the school. Pupils have a wide range of responsibilities in the school and, through the work of the school council and the Blackwell Job Scheme, make an excellent contribution to the school community. They respect each others' similarities and differences in terms of faith, ethnicity and socio-economic background and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

The excellent curriculum results in pupils developing a wide range of skills for the next stage of their education. This includes many leadership and teamwork skills through their involvement in school life and in the community. Excellent care, guidance and support ensure that all pupils are able to learn and develop confidence, regardless of their individual circumstances. The performance of pupils is tracked closely, with particular attention to the performance of different groups. Blackwell First is a highly inclusive school and all pupils are able to take full advantage of all the school has to offer. The school has excellent links with its local community but realises there is a need to strengthen opportunities for pupils to learn about children in other situations around

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the country and globally. The school has a good understanding of how well it is doing and what needs to be done next and, due to the high quality of its self-evaluation, it has a good capacity to maintain and sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- – Work to broaden the school's impact on community cohesion beyond the local community by formulating a plan to further promote the national and global dimensions.
- Strengthen the role of foundation subject coordinators by providing opportunities for them to observe the quality of teaching in their subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

The latest results for the end of Year 2 were above the national average, as they have been consistently for the past five years. Attainment by the time pupils leave the school, at the end of Year 4, is well above average for their age, with a significant proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils' exemplary behaviour is an outstanding factor in the good progress they make in lessons and creates a very positive school ethos. The response of pupils in lessons is always positive. They work very well together and individually without the need for constant reminders and there is no evidence of disruptive behaviour. They take great pride in presenting their work well and it is vibrantly displayed throughout the school. Pupils know and understand the important factors which affect their health and respond very well to the school's health promotion strategies which have earned the school the Healthy Schools' Award. They comment very positively on the many adults and pupils who look after them and help them resolve their disputes. They say they feel very safe in and around the school. Pupils value their school community and willingly take on responsibilities. They participate constructively in school life, suggesting and taking actions to help improve the school. They respect each others' needs and interests and are curious about the world around them. This high level of responsibility and contribution is demonstrated particularly well in the innovative 'Blackwell Job Scheme'. Each job around the school, advertised by the class teacher, has a job description. Year 4 pupils make written applications, sometimes including references, for these jobs. They are paid for undertaking these jobs in 'Blackwell Pounds' which they save in the Blackwell Bank, which is run by pupils. They can write cheques to withdraw their funds and, if they decide to leave their money in the bank, it earns interest. Their 'pounds' can be used to buy privileges. As a result, pupils are very well-equipped for the future with their well-developed academic and social skills, having learned to be self-reliant and confident.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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	1
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	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have strong subject knowledge which enthuses and challenges pupils and contributes to their good progress. Lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives that are routinely shared with pupils so that they are clear about their learning. Carefully targeted questioning draws out pupils' ideas and develops their thinking and reasoning skills. Support by teaching assistants makes a significant contribution to the quality of learning across the school. In one outstanding literacy lesson, the teacher ensured all pupils understood exactly why they were learning to write a good paragraph, made good links to previous learning, set and maintained a very good pace throughout and used questioning very effectively to judge and guide pupils' learning. As a result, pupils were totally on task at all times and made excellent progress. However, in one otherwise satisfactory lesson, the pace of learning slowed after the initial input from the teacher and pupils made only satisfactory progress as a result. The whole-school assessment and tracking system provides the school with secure data on pupils' progress as they move through the school. This means teachers have a good understanding of how well their pupils are doing and the action to be taken to support them effectively in order to reach their challenging targets.

The exciting new curriculum provides carefully adapted activities to ensure all groups of pupils experience success. One parent wrote: 'My child really loves the topic-based approach and in the last 18 months has become increasingly animated about what she

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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is learning'. There is appropriate emphasis on developing key skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology and on extending pupils' knowledge and skills in other subjects, particularly in music and physical education. The school's excellent and well-organised arrangements for the care, guidance and support of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, contribute to their good development and well-being and support their learning very well. Pupils are secure, safe and very well looked after. The school knows its pupils very well and takes great care to effectively promote their social well-being and equality.

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 provides strong and effective leadership. All staff work together very well as a team and are strongly motivated. As a result, the school has a very clear sense of direction including a strong commitment to improving provision even further. Performance management targets drawn from the outcomes of regular monitoring have resulted in good teaching. Whole school tracking and assessment systems have been strengthened. Core subject leaders have been effective in identifying weaknesses in their subjects and have overseen measurable improvements in writing and mathematics, for example. Leaders in other subjects do not have a similarly full understanding of provision as they have not all had the opportunity to undertake observations of teaching in their subjects. The governors fulfil their roles well and have a good overview of the school's work and future priorities. The school has an extremely positive relationship with parents and carers and regularly asks for their views and acts on the responses. As a result, all parents and carers feel that the school takes account of their suggestions, that it keeps them well informed about their children's progress and that it ensures their children are well-prepared for the future. This very effective liaison contributes significantly to improvements in pupils' achievement, well-being and development. Excellent partnerships with local schools and community organisations allow pupils to enjoy a range of experiences the school cannot provide. This fully inclusive school ensures that all pupils have equal opportunities. The school has excellent procedures for safeguarding pupils which surpass recommended good practice across all areas of its work, and is a leader in providing advice to other schools in the cluster. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. It has a wide range of effective programmes for outreach locally. However, despite these excellent links with the local community, it realises there is a need to further develop the wider national and global

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dimensions in order to give pupils a better understanding of what life is like for children in other areas of the country and overseas.

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	1
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

Provision for the youngest children is good. Although, due to the small cohorts, overall attainment on entry to the school can vary, in most years, children enter the Reception class with skills that are above those typical for their age. They clearly enjoy school, settling into the routines well and playing happily together or on their own. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage undertake a variety of whole class and group activities indoors and out. They delight in learning and seeing new things. Pastoral care and welfare arrangements are effective. Consequently, children are safe, well cared for and aware of how to be healthy. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified quickly, are well supported and are integrated well into all activities.

The Early Years Foundation Stage classroom has free access to a secure outdoor area with a covered area to allow use in inclement weather and this is resourced well with a good range of adult-led and free-choice activities linked to the current class topic. The 'free-flow' system allows children to explore things with purpose and challenge and encourages them to make decisions for themselves, solve problems and develop their reasoning skills. Independent learning is further enhanced by the much-enjoyed and anticipated weekly visit to the school's 'Forest School' area. There are now good systems for the long-term assessment and tracking of children's progress. However, these have only been in use since the start of the school year and need time to become 'embedded'

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into the whole school assessment and tracking system. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The new Early Years Foundation Stage leader has significantly improved assessment and tracking systems and has a good knowledge of the learning development and welfare requirements and guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children make good progress as a result.

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 response to the questionnaire was better than that found nationally in primary schools - almost all families returned a completed questionnaire. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers have very positive views of the school. All who responded feel, for example, that their children enjoy school, keeps them safe, encourages them to have a healthy lifestyle, that teaching is good and that it is led and managed effectively. All state that they are happy with their children's experience. A very small minority of parents and carers indicated that they do not feel the school meets their children's particular needs but did not explain the reasons for their judgment. Inspectors did not find any evidence to support this judgement.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Blackwell First School 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 68 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 105 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	60	88	8	12	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	62	91	6	9	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	47	69	21	31	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	45	66	21	31	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	56	82	12	18	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	43	63	23	34	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	58	85	10	15	0	0	0	0
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)	44	65	24	35	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	47	69	19	28	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	42	62	22	32	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	52	76	16	24	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	60	88	7	10	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	60	88	8	12	0	0	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



28 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blackwell First School, Bromsgrove, B60 1BN

Thank you for welcoming the inspectors to your school and for talking to us about what you do there. Blackwell First is an excellent school. Those who lead your school do so very well and all the adults take exceptionally good care of you. It was good to see that you clearly enjoy school and that you have a really good understanding of how to keep safe and how important it is to eat healthily and take regular exercise. It is to your credit that you behave exceptionally well, and get on well with each other and with all the staff. Your levels of attendance are also very high. This ensures you all make good progress and achieve good standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers work hard to help you to learn and to make sure you enjoy being at school. It was good to hear from the school councillors about how you are helping to improve the school and we were particularly impressed with the Blackwell Job Scheme. You told us that you like your school very much and there are lots of things to do and enjoy.

We have asked the staff and governing body to do two things that we feel will help to improve your school even further:

- make links with schools in other parts of the United Kingdom and overseas so that you can learn more about the lives of children from different backgrounds to your own
- giving teachers in charge of subjects opportunities to observe lessons so that they can find ways of making teaching and learning even better.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Clive Lewis

Lead Inspector

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