

Blakesley Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121959
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314166
Inspection dates	13 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Terry Elston

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	92
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine Rodhouse
Headteacher	Mary Barnett
Date of previous school inspection	11–13 October 2004
School address	The Green Blakesley Towcester Northamptonshire NN12 8RD
Telephone number	01327 860257
Fax number	01327 860257

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the standards and progress of pupils at Key Stage 2 in science
- how well the school helps pupils understand and appreciate the diverse cultures in their society
- the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum.

The inspectors gathered evidence from observations of lessons, discussions with pupils, governors and staff, tracking pupils' progress, analysis of attendance and gaining the views of parents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This very small village school admits pupils from a wide catchment area. The proportion of pupils that leave prior to Year 6 is higher than is normally found because some parents choose to send their children to schools in the private sector. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage provision (EYFS) with skills typical of their ages. The headteacher was appointed in September 2007.

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 a good school where pupils do well in all aspects of their development and leave well prepared for the future. They feel proud to be part of a close-knit community where everyone's feelings are valued and respected. They achieve well because the teaching is consistently good and they work very hard. Pupils build well on their fast start in Reception and their standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. This good progress is maintained in Key Stage 2, and standards are above average in both English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. In science, while standards are a little above average, some pupils are unsure what to do when asked to complete more complex experiments. The school recognises the need to provide pupils with more practice in science investigations. The school has developed a good reputation for its support of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and their speedy progress is testament to the effectiveness of the provision.

Pupils love school and attend regularly. They like being part of a small school where they make close friends of all ages. They develop a very clear sense of right and wrong and behave exceptionally well, both in class and around the school. They take responsibility readily, and members of the school council take their duties seriously. Pupils think deeply about issues such as the environment and sustainability and write sensitive poems about topics such as loneliness and poverty. They have a good awareness of other cultures and gain much from their close links with pupils from Belarus and their fund raising for a child in India. Pupils are closely involved in their community through the church and by working with local people to improve village facilities.

Pupils think highly of their teachers who they say are 'friendly and helpful'. Teachers work hard at making lessons fun so that pupils enjoy learning. They have high expectations of pupils, who respond by always trying to do their best. Teachers' knowledge of subjects is mostly very good, although not all have the confidence or skills to encourage pupils to make full use of ICT in lessons. Assessment systems are thorough, and teachers use them well to provide work at the right level for pupils' abilities.

The curriculum is planned well. It provides a good structure for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills while giving them many opportunities to hone their sporting and artistic talents. Provision for music is a real strength, and many pupils sing and play instruments to a high standard. The comprehensive personal, social and health education curriculum ensures that pupils have a very good awareness of the need to look after their bodies and see the dangers associated with smoking, drugs and alcohol. A wide range of visits and visitors from around the world enrich the curriculum and enhance pupils' cultural awareness.

Parents value highly the good care, support and guidance offered by the school. As one said, 'It's clear that children are very much at the forefront of every decision made.' The staff know the pupils very well and ensure that any who are worried or upset are supported effectively. All safeguarding procedures are robust and

monitored regularly. The school tracks pupils' progress very systematically so that any pupils who are falling behind are given help.

These many strengths are made possible by strong but sensitive leadership and management. The headteacher has made a positive start in her first year and has a good feel for how to improve the provision. Already, initiatives to raise standards in writing and mathematics have borne fruit, and moves to improve provision for ICT and science are well under way. Other senior staff provide good support to the headteacher and play an important part in school improvement. The knowledgeable governors support the school enthusiastically and are not afraid to hold the leaders to account. The school has done well since the last inspection and is well set to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage **Grade: 2**

Provision is good. Children get off to a good start when they join Reception because of the good communication between the school and pre-school providers. The children make good progress and leave the Reception with skills higher than those expected of their ages. The good care and support mean that they develop their personal and social skills particularly well and behaviour is excellent.

Parents are unanimous that it is the good teaching that makes their children want to come to school every day. Teachers capture children's interest by using resources imaginatively and setting demanding challenges. For example, children made excellent progress in their literacy skills and learned much about their environment when reconstructing a story read to them and building their own tree using materials from a nearby wood. Staff observe and record children's progress carefully and use this information well to plan the next steps in learning.

The detailed curriculum planning gives children a good balance of work and play. The classroom is bright and stimulating with lots of examples of children's work to remind them of their learning. The children have reasonable access to the outdoor area, but there is a lack of equipment to fully develop children's imagination and physical skills. The school has a good action plan to improve this area in the very near future.

The leadership and management are good. The staff work very closely as a team to enable children to develop a love of learning. They have a clear understanding of how to improve the provision in order to raise achievement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in science at Key Stage 2 by giving pupils more opportunities to develop their experimental skills.
- Ensure that all teachers have the skills and confidence to make full use of ICT in all subjects.

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Annex A

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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/or disabilities make progress	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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
2The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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 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?	2

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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

Annex B

14 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blakesley Church of England Primary School, Towcester, NN12 8RD

Thank you for your valuable help during the recent inspection of your school. We were very impressed with the way you spoke so confidently to us. It was good to see you work so hard and have such fun in school. You are clearly very proud of your good school and you are right to be.

What we found out about your school.

- You make good progress and the standard of your work is higher than is found in most schools.
- You have a good knowledge of how to keep safe and live healthy lives.
- Your teachers do a good job. They make lessons fun so that you enjoy learning.
- You enjoy the activities planned for you and the wide range of clubs at lunchtime and after school for things like music and sport. The Rock Club was particularly impressive!
- Your behaviour is outstanding, and you take very good care of each other.
- You enjoy taking responsibility and the school council helps makes important improvements to your school.
- Your school's leaders run the school well and know how to improve it further.
- All the adults take very good care of you and are always there if you need help.

What we would like the school to do now.

- Help you to improve your skills in doing experiments in science. You can help by taking more care when planning your investigations.
- Give you more opportunities to use ICT in lessons.

Best wishes for the future!

Yours faithfully

Terry Elston
Lead inspector