

Blakedown CofE Primary School

Birmingham Road, Blakedown, Kidderminster DY10 3JN

Inspection dates	8–9 June 2016
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not maintained the good quality of teaching and achievement seen at the time of the last inspection.
- Standards at the end of key stages 1 and 2 have declined and pupils do not make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Priorities identified in the school development plan are not well-defined. As a result, governors and staff are not clear about what the key priorities for improvement are or if they are successful.
- Subject leaders are not fully and regularly involved in checking the quality of teaching. As a result, they have been slow to bring about improvement in their respective areas.
- Leaders do not analyse the progress made by different groups and are, therefore, unclear how well these pupils are doing.
- The work teachers set for pupils is too hard for some and too easy for others. The most able pupils are not suitably challenged and some do not reach their potential.
- Some teachers move pupils on too quickly in lessons before pupils have grasped the concepts introduced. Other pupils are not moved on when they show they have mastered the skills taught.
- Sometimes, teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are not high enough. Some pupils are overly supported in lessons so lack confidence to work independently or record work for themselves.
- Governors do not have a secure understanding of how well the school is doing as some information provided is ambiguous.

The school has the following strengths

- Teaching is good in the early years and children make good progress. As a result, children make a positive start to school life.
- Phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is taught well. The proportion of pupils reaching the level required in Year 1 is above the national average.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and enriched well with exciting events and topics.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe. They are polite and courteous and work hard. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe and are confident to report any concerns to adults in school.
- Leaders strongly promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. British values are also taught well and, consequently, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Attendance is above average.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and thereby raise achievement in key stages 1 and 2, especially in mathematics, by ensuring that:
 - work is set at the right level for pupils of different abilities and challenges them to do better, especially the most able
 - teachers check pupils' understanding during lessons and move pupils on when they show they are ready, or provide them with extra support
 - teachers' expectations are higher so that pupils carry out more recording for themselves and are confident to work independently.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the priorities identified in the school development plan are clear and known by all leaders, including governors
 - the role of subject leaders is developed so that they contribute to monitoring and improving the quality of teaching in their subject areas
 - assessment information is filtered to provide an overview for governors and staff as to how well different groups are achieving, including boys, girls, disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs or a disability and the most able.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management should be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders' own evaluation of the quality of teaching and how well the school is performing is overgenerous. They have not taken into account the school's decline in outcomes since the previous inspection. Leaders have started to take suitable action and achievement is beginning to rise.
- While leaders have identified the right priorities for improvement in the school development plan, these are not always set out clearly. Although mathematics and writing are the two main priorities, a wide range of other priorities are included in the plan such as the early years and developing pupils' learning and thinking skills which are not key priorities. This has resulted in governors and staff not being clear about precisely which aspects are the most important and the school is focusing on. While ongoing monitoring of the development plan is carried out, leaders do not evaluate which actions are having an impact and which are not.
- Although subject leaders lead training for staff, they are not systematically or regularly involved in checking on the quality of teaching in their respective subjects. Records show that monitoring has been intermittent since the previous inspection and the decline in results has not been addressed quickly enough.
- Leaders have successfully introduced a new assessment tracking system following the removal of national curriculum levels. However, the information is not analysed for different groups of pupils, for example, boys, girls, disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs, or the most able. As a result, leaders do not know precisely what progress these groups are making.
- The headteacher has created a caring and nurturing school. Every child is fully included in all aspects of school life. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about how approachable the headteacher is and how well all teachers and staff look after and care for their children. Staff morale is high.
- Although standards have declined since the previous inspection, the headteacher has actively sought help and advice to redress areas of weakness, for example, in mathematics. Staff have worked alongside other schools and the headteacher has commissioned external national consultants and leaders from teaching schools to review provision for pupils. Extensive training has been implemented for teaching staff. This is beginning to impact on the quality of teaching. Achievement is beginning to rise as a result.
- Annual targets set for teaching staff have become increasingly challenging in order to ensure that teachers focus on helping pupils to reach the levels expected and to make consistently good progress. Targets are based on improving mathematics and writing in all classes and closely linked to the school's development plan. This process is helping to hold teachers more fully to account.
- Exciting topics underpin the curriculum. Displays around the school showcase the broad range of subjects covered. A wide range of opportunities exist for pupils to use their English and mathematical skills in other subjects. Pupils' cultural development is also strongly promoted through music, art and French lessons. The curriculum is exceptionally well enriched by visits, visitors and clubs. For example, in celebrating 400 years of Shakespeare's legacy, pupils wrote sonnets and attended an English workshop in Stratford-upon-Avon. These opportunities provide pupils with memorable and enjoyable experiences.
- Leaders strongly promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Close links with the church ensure that pupils understand and share Christian values. Values such as 'humility' and 'gratitude' are taught to all age groups in assemblies by the local vicar, who is also the chair of the governing body. Reflection time is used effectively to develop pupils' spiritual awareness.
- British values are taught well and with conviction. Pupils have a strong understanding of the rule of law, tolerance and democracy. Pupils have a good knowledge of right and wrong, respect for other cultures and religions, and current affairs. For example, key stage 2 pupils wrote maturely about issues they would tackle if in government, such as ensuring that sufficient armed forces were in place to protect our country. Additionally, pupils have good levels of understanding about the imminent ballot surrounding the association with the European Union. They hold opinions and value their British roots. As one pupil in key stage 1 put it, pointing to a display in the corridor, 'We're proud to be British'.
- There are only a very small number of disadvantaged pupils in the school. However, leaders use the pupil premium funding allocated for these pupils well. Monies received are used to provide additional support for eligible pupils so that they make at least similar progress to their peers. Primarily, this is used to provide effective additional adult help in lessons or to withdraw pupils who have emotional or social needs.

- The primary school physical education (PE) and sports funding is used to enhance pupils' physical health and well-being. A sports coach has increased the range of sporting opportunities offered, together with training and development opportunities for staff. As a result, pupils enjoy PE and staff are more confident in teaching other areas, such as dance and gymnastics. Pupils also take part in an increased number of local sports competitions, for example tag rugby.
- Parents have extremely positive views of the school. They appreciate and value the support and quality of care provided by the headteacher and all staff members. Typical comments include 'This is a fabulous school' and 'My child loves school and will be sad to leave.'
- The local authority has provided support to leaders and staff which is contributing to the improvements in achievement and teaching now being seen. They have confidence in the leadership of the school and have rightly judged that there is future capacity to improve. However, they were slow to intervene when the decline in standards was emerging.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are provided with a diverse and vast range of information by the headteacher. They are extremely dedicated and committed to ensuring that pupils develop into thoughtful, sensible and caring citizens. However, some of the information presented is overly complex or ambiguous. As a result, governors are not always clear about the school's key priorities or the school's effectiveness.
 - Governors have some understanding of assessment information as this is presented by the headteacher in her termly reports. They are also aware of the context of individual pupils, who on occasion do not achieve well, due to the small numbers on roll. However, this information is not summarised to give governors the headlines as to which groups are achieving well and if any cohorts are falling behind in reading, writing or mathematics.
 - Governors set and review leadership targets for the headteacher and receive appropriate information about teachers' performance management each year. They are involved in carrying out book scrutinies and visit classrooms with leaders to help gather first-hand information and improve their knowledge and understanding of teaching and learning.
 - Governors keep a close eye on the budget and ensure finances are spent wisely. They carry out their statutory responsibilities effectively, including in relation to safeguarding. Governors attend regular training to ensure that their knowledge and skills are kept up to date. The school's website provides helpful information for parents.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The headteacher ensures that safeguarding is a collective responsibility. All staff work hard to make sure that pupils feel safe and are safe. Staff receive regular training to ensure that they know what to do if they have a concern about a child. Advice is sought when needed from external agencies in a timely manner. Safer recruitment procedures are robust and checks carried out ensure that all adults working in school are suitably vetted. The school site is safe and secure.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching over time has not ensured that pupils have made good progress as they move through the school. As a result, some pupils, especially in key stage 2, have underachieved since the previous inspection and not all current pupils are working at the levels they should be. Actions taken this year are leading to improvements in the quality of teaching and, consequently, progress is accelerating.
- Sometimes teachers do not set work at the right level to meet pupils' varying needs or abilities; work is too hard for some and too easy for others. Evidence in books shows that until recently, too many tasks have been the same for lower- and higher-ability pupils. For example, using negative numbers in mathematics proved too difficult for lower-ability pupils in Year 5 and all calculations attempted were wrong. However, this activity did not challenge or extend the learning of the most able who already had a good understanding of negative numbers. Visits made to classrooms during the inspection show teachers now plan lessons for pupils with different levels of ability.
- Some teachers do not check that pupils understand concepts introduced in lessons before moving them on. As a result, pupils are sometimes confused and gaps appear in their learning. For example, some pupils in Year 2 did not understand the use of inverse operations for multiplication and division introduced at the start of the lesson before being moved on to solving word problems as the main task. Equally, teachers do not move pupils on when they show they have mastered the concepts introduced and adjust tasks in order to deepen pupils' understanding.

- On occasion, teachers' expectations of what pupils know and can do are not high enough. Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to set out their own work and practise and develop their recording skills. The structure of worksheets sometimes provided reduces the amount and the quality of work pupils produce in both English and mathematics. Some pupils lack confidence in working independently because they are overly supported in lessons.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge, especially in English. They use technical vocabulary appropriately and pupils are familiar with the terms used. Teaching is stronger in English than in mathematics and, as a result, progress in reading and writing is accelerating at a faster rate than in mathematics.
- There are many good opportunities for pupils to read widely and develop their reading skills in different subjects. Phonics is taught well in the early years and key stage 1 and pupils build on these skills to become confident and avid readers. Pupils told the inspector that they 'love to read at bedtime'.
- Teachers plan writing activities which inspire and motivate pupils. For example, pupils in Year 2 were engrossed in writing about the '10 things you would find in a wizard's pocket'. All pupils were inspired to write imaginatively and were very eager to share their completed work at the end of the lesson with the rest of the class, wearing the wizard's cloak.
- Greater attention is being paid by teachers to developing pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling. This is helping to improve the standard of pupils' writing. Pupils have, and use, good vocabulary, for example the use of the word 'precarious' in a sentence in Year 5. Although pupils' spelling strategies are not yet secure, older pupils independently collect dictionaries to help them with their spelling.
- There are increased opportunities for pupils to use problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics. Exciting investigations challenge pupils to think hard and work systematically. Occasionally, too many concepts are introduced which then confuse pupils, for example, in halving odd numbers, pupils in Year 1 were encouraged to represent a half by using a decimal figure (0.5) rather than as a fraction.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, particularly those who have special educational needs or disability or those who are disadvantaged. Nurture and support are provided so that these pupils achieve in line with others in their class.
- Marking and feedback provided by teachers to pupils is increasingly developmental. All teachers adhere to the school's policy and provide helpful comments to enable pupils to improve their work.
- All classrooms and areas around school are bright and vibrant. Helpful prompts are displayed on 'working walls' to support pupils and pupils' best work is showcased. Good relationships between adults and pupils are evident in all classes and teachers manage pupils' behaviour effectively.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have a strong sense of pride in their school and their work. They are keen to do well and apply themselves fully in lessons. Pupils say they enjoy learning and feel well supported by adults.
- Pupils have a good understanding of staying healthy and the importance of exercise. They learn about good health in topic work. Sports clubs, swimming lessons and healthy snacks and lunches successfully aid pupils' physical development and well-being.
- Pupils readily take on additional responsibilities, such as being a school council representative or a member of the worship council. Pupils often play together in mixed-age groups due to the nature of being in a small school. Pupils say 'Blakedown is like one big family.'
- Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that adults will sort problems out if they are reported. Visitors, such as those from ChildLine, teach pupils about keeping themselves safe. Pupils have a good knowledge about the dangers of using the internet as they are taught well about e-safety. Year 6 pupils also attend an annual 'young citizens challenge' each year where emergency services and other organisations re-enforce the need to be vigilant and stay safe.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying including cyber, physical and verbal bullying. The majority of pupils who responded to the online survey said bullying does not happen in their school. The remaining pupils said it happens sometimes, but teachers are really good at resolving it.
- The wide range of opportunities provided, together with the very high levels of nurture and support, ensure that pupils are well-rounded and caring individuals who are well prepared, in terms of their personal development, for the next stage of their education.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are courteous, polite and respectful in lessons and around school. They know and follow the school's behaviour policy. They understand the order of sanctions imposed through the behaviour zone boards in all classrooms and enjoy receiving the rewards offered in the 'gold box' in exchange for team points and star cards.
- Pupils are tidy and help keep the school environment free from litter and clutter. All wear school uniform and are neatly attired.
- Pupils are punctual and arrive at school on time. Attendance is above the national average and reflects how much pupils enjoy school.
- All parents who contributed their views said that their children are safe, happy and well looked after at Blakedown. All would recommend the school to other parents.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Outcomes for pupils require improvement because pupils are not making consistently good progress across the school. Standards at the end of key stages 1 and 2 have declined since the previous inspection. Attainment at the end of key stage 1 is average in all subjects but fell to below average in key stage 2 in 2015. Pupils who left Year 6 in 2014 and 2015 did not make enough progress in writing and mathematics. They made expected progress in reading.
- The progress of current pupils is improving, especially in English. The majority of pupils are working at the levels appropriate for their age in reading, writing and mathematics in most classes and increasing numbers are beginning to work above this.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the level expected in the Year 1 phonics reading check is above average. This is because phonics is taught well from the outset.
- The most able pupils do not always make enough progress or attain as well as they should. This is because the level of challenge presented in lessons is not high enough and teachers' expectations are too low. The proportion of pupils who reached the higher levels in Year 2 was below average in all subjects in 2015 and well below average in Year 6 in grammar, punctuation, spelling and mathematics.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make expected progress. This is in line with the progress of their classmates.
- There is only a very small number of disadvantaged pupils in the school. However, the support provided ensures that they make at least expected progress and do not fall behind their peers. The effective use of the pupil premium funding has ensured that attainment gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school have closed. There are too few pupils to compare their attainment to that of others nationally.
- Pupils have not always been well enough prepared academically for the next stage of their education in the last few years. However, inspection evidence shows that this situation is improving and the school is recovering well from its downward trend.

Early years provision

is good

- Children make better progress in the early years than in key stages 1 and 2 because of consistently good teaching and good leadership. Children join the school with skills and knowledge which are typical for their age. Their mathematical understanding is usually stronger than their literacy skills on entry. They make good progress because of good routines that help them settle well and grow in confidence. By the end of the Reception year, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development is above the national average. This figure is rising year on year.
- Boys do equally well as girls because planned activities interest and engage them. Activities are often linked to the class topic and help extend all aspects of children's early development. For example, the teacher skilfully planned a range of activities based on this year's Olympic Games in Brazil. During the inspection, children measured rainforest animals, completed jigsaw and computer puzzles about different countries and pretended to be travel agents in the role play area. High levels of imaginative play were evident when children asked the inspector where she wanted to go on her holidays, and if she had a passport. The relevant details were then jotted down with a message to 'come back later for your tickets'.

- All adults question children effectively and model correct written and spoken language. High levels of attention are paid to individuals so that all children make good progress and are fully included in all activities. There is a good balance of time spent with the teacher and time for children to choose their own activities. All aspects of the early years curriculum are promoted equally and, as a result, children achieve well in all areas.
- Good use is made of both the outdoor and indoor learning space. Colourful displays of children's work adorn the classroom and helpful resources and prompts are available to ensure that children form letters and numbers correctly.
- Leadership is good. Good links exist with the feeder playschool and parents to ensure that induction runs smoothly. Home visits were being carried out during the inspection so that the early years leader could get to know as many of the children as possible in advance of them starting school in September, and establish a good relationship with the parents. The early years leader has a clear overview of the strengths and areas for development in the early years. She assesses children's abilities accurately and collects evidence to demonstrate the progress made by children during the year. This is uploaded onto an electronic system and shared with parents so that they can add their own comments and see how well their children are achieving.
- Children are safe and happy because of the secure procedures that exist in the early years for children's welfare and safeguarding. Their behaviour is good because adults have high expectations of them and clear boundaries are set. Children have positive attitudes to learning and play well together. Adults know the needs of the children well and give them good care and attention. A wide range of activities make a good contribution to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

School details

Unique reference number	116784
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10000757

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	138
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Harrison
Headteacher	Helen Beckford-Bond
Telephone number	01562 700243
Website	www.blakedowncofeprimary.co.uk
Email address	office@blakedownprimary.worcs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 April 2012

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school's admission number was increased from 15 places to 30 places in September 2014. As a result, numbers on roll are rising. Pupils are currently taught in single-age groups up to Year 2 but in mixed-aged classes in key stage 2.
- The early years consists of one Reception class which children attend full time.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and all speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is well below the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below the national average.
- In 2015, the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- The school's website meets the current statutory requirements to publish information for parents.
- A breakfast club operates on the school premises but is privately managed and therefore inspected separately.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in all classes. She saw 10 parts of lessons, six of which were jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher, other staff with leadership responsibilities and members of the governing body. The inspector also spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 42 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the comments made. She also spoke to parents and grandparents as they collected pupils from school.
- Pupils' views were also considered by talking to pupils both formally and informally during the school day and through the 26 responses to the online pupil survey.
- Staff views were considered through the five responses to the staff online questionnaire.
- The inspector listened to pupils read, talked to them about their learning and reviewed the work in their books.
- The inspector reviewed a number of documents, including the school's own evaluation on how well it is doing, the school development plan, assessment information about pupils' achievement, leaders' reports about the quality of teaching and learning, minutes of governors' meetings and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Heather Simpson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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