

Bledington Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115505
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	311955
Inspection date	11 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Martin James

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	79
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Nye
Headteacher	Philip Croke
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2004
School address	Old Burford Road Bledington Chipping Norton OX7 6US
Telephone number	01608 658388
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is much smaller than most primary schools. Nearly all pupils are from a White British background. Few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to the national average. In recognition of its work, the school has received the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards.

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 achieve well. Pupils are well behaved, and they are also polite, courteous and welcoming. They say they really enjoy school. Pupils are well cared for, with their safety being a priority of the school. However, the guidance provided through marking and target setting does not always help them understand clearly how to improve their work. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and their social skills are well developed. Parents are very positive about the school, and many said how much they valued the quality of the learning environment provided for their children. One said, typically, 'We feel that special mention needs to be made of the tremendous family ethos encouraged by the school.'

Children get off to a good start in Reception and by the end of the year, they usually reach average standards, and occasionally exceed them. Pupils continue to achieve well in Years 1 to 6, with the result that standards are above average by the end of Year 6. However, the school recognises that more able pupils do not always do as well as they might.

Good teaching is a key factor in pupils' good progress. Relationships are good, teaching assistants make an important contribution to pupils' learning and teachers make good use of a variety of resources and strategies to make the lessons interesting. Lessons are thoroughly planned, with careful allowance made for the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Allowance is also made for more able pupils. However, on occasions, this work is not challenging enough to suit their particular needs. The good curriculum contributes well to pupils' enjoyment of school and also aids their learning within lessons. In particular, it helps to make them very aware of the need to follow a healthy lifestyle. The school routinely reviews its curriculum, with a current emphasis being placed on increasing cross-curricular links, especially involving the use of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, to make it even more interesting and engaging. The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of visits and musical and sporting activities which broaden pupils' experiences.

The headteacher and other members of staff are committed to improving the provision they make for their pupils. Self-evaluation is effective in identifying where improvement is needed. For example, remedial action has been successful in improving the performance of girls, and the emphasis is now switching to focus on more able pupils. Governors support the school well, and they are fully involved in budgeting and development planning. The improvements that have been made, both recently and since the previous inspection, and the quality of the current provision show that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Reception Year, because they make a smooth start to school and are taught well. This ensures the children are happy in school and they enjoy their learning. The staff work hard to create a friendly and caring learning environment, and the children also benefit from the good links that are established with parents. Adults provide the children with a good balance between teacher-led activities and chances for them to choose for themselves, and take every opportunity to talk to them to help develop their speaking skills. A good range of resources is provided, with the outdoor area being used routinely. The children

behave well, although a small number sometimes find it difficult to maintain concentration on the tasks they have chosen.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers provide challenging work for pupils, especially the more able, so that their learning is consistently good through the school.
- Ensure that marking and target setting help pupils understand clearly how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards overall are above average and pupils' achievement is good. When children start in Reception, their knowledge and skills are usually broadly as expected, although a small number have weaknesses in their language skills. However, mainly because of the very small groups entering the school each year, these skills can vary widely, sometimes being below average and occasionally above. The children achieve well and by the end of the year, they usually reach the expected levels and, on occasions, exceed them. The current Year 2 pupils were a lower performing group when they entered Year 1, and the present broadly average standards represent good progress through the key stage.

By the end of Year 6, overall standards are above average. This represents good achievement from these pupils' particular starting point. In 2007, girls in both Year 2 and Year 6 did not perform quite as well as the boys. The school recognised this, and the strategies introduced to address the issue have been successful, with boys and girls now performing equally well. The school makes good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and this is helping them to make good progress. However, the progress made by more able pupils, although good overall, is not so consistent, and at times it could be better.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave well; they enjoy attending school and they have most sensible attitudes to their work. Pupils feel safe in school, they say that bullying is not a problem and they are confident in the support of staff should any problems arise. They readily adopt safe practices, such as when using computers to search the internet. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and the wider community. In school, pupils happily carry out a variety of responsibilities, such as being members of the school council and acting as 'buddies' for other pupils. The school is very involved in the local village community, and, for example, pupils regularly sing in the church and take part in activities such as maypole dancing.

Pupils have a clear understanding of how to live healthy lives, and they eat fruit and healthy meals in school. They also benefit from the good opportunities provided by the school for exercise and sport, such as the daily 'Wake and Shake' sessions. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, although their understanding of multicultural society is less well developed. Pupils' personal skills, such as their confidence and independence, are well developed and they are making good progress in literacy and numeracy. This is preparing them well for their next stage of education, as well as later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers provide interesting lessons for pupils, using a good range of resources and strategies. Classes are well managed and relationships are a strength. As a result, pupils are well behaved, keen to learn and ready to work hard. Teachers' explanations are clear, and they successfully engage pupils' interest. Good use is made of paired discussion. However, occasionally, opportunities are missed for pupils to discuss their work at length in front of the whole class, to help them clarify their ideas. Teachers make good use of the interactive audio-visual whiteboards to motivate pupils and develop their understanding. For example, clear graphics were used to aid pupils' understanding in a mathematics lesson on money in Years 1 and 2. Pupils respond well, they work with enthusiasm and they enjoy their learning. Teaching assistants are well deployed to promote learning, especially that of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This ensures they are able to fully join in all class activities. Teachers plan a suitable range of work for the different ages and abilities in their classes. However, they do not always provide work that is challenging enough for more able pupils, so that on occasions their knowledge and skills are not fully extended during the lesson.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum enables pupils to study a broad range of subjects, and this contributes to their good progress. Planning is successful in providing for the different age-groups in each class. The school recognises that the curriculum has lacked some variety and interest and, as a result, links are beginning to be made between subjects, where appropriate, to produce topics to motivate pupils even more. A particular emphasis is also being placed on the greater use of literacy and numeracy within these topics, to help develop these skills further. The introduction of resources and activities of particular interest to girls has led to the improvement in their performance that is evident in their classwork. Pupils' learning difficulties are carefully identified, and pupils are provided with a good range of tasks and activities. There is a good emphasis throughout the school on developing pupils' personal and social skills, and the curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' safe and healthy lifestyles. There is a good range of outings, visitors and after-school clubs, which contribute well both to pupils' learning and their enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The welfare of the pupils is at the heart of the school's work, and adults ensure that there is good pastoral care. Parents in turn speak highly of the provision the school makes for their children, recognising that there is a strong focus on ensuring the well-being of every pupil. Good use is made of outside bodies in supporting this care of the pupils when a need is identified. Child protection procedures are good, and staff are alert to signs that any pupil might be distressed. Safeguarding procedures are robust. Staff promote a safe, secure and clean environment. Safety checks and risk assessments are routinely carried out. Pupils are taught about the importance of healthy living, and they are regularly reminded of the need to take care, for instance when doing physical education.

Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, but whilst they often add words of praise, they rarely provide pupils with advice about improving their work. Pupils have targets for improving their work. However, these are too broad, and discussions with pupils suggest that they do not always have a clear understanding about what they need to do to make their work better.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher leads the school with both enthusiasm and skill. He is well supported by other staff members. There is a clear sense of teamwork, together with a strong desire to improve the provision for the pupils, particularly the progress that they make. The learning environment that has been developed provides an exciting backdrop against which pupils can learn. The school has good systems for finding out how well it is doing, including seeking the views of parents. The self-review has accurately identified strengths and areas for development. For example, the work to improve the performance of girls has been successful, and the current focus on improving the quality of marking and target setting is an appropriate priority for the school. Staff also recognise the need to make sure that the more able pupils are always sufficiently challenged in their work.

The subject leaders show a clear understanding of the provision in their subjects, and they have actively initiated and supported strategies for making improvements. However, they have only had limited opportunities to observe lessons in other classes to help them identify further development areas. Governance is good, and governors are regular visitors to the school. They are currently working to develop further their understanding of test and assessment data, so that they may more readily exercise their role of 'critical friends' should the need arise.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	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 disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The 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	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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 the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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.

Annex A**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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

12 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Bledington Primary School, Bledington OX7 6US

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. We enjoyed our visit and it was a pleasure talking to you. My colleague especially liked talking to the school council, and we both really enjoyed joining you in lessons. I am writing to tell you what we found out about the school, what we think is good, and what we think could be made better. Overall, you are in a good school, where you are doing well with your work. Your headteacher and other staff know what they need to do to make the school even better.

These things are some of the strengths of the school:

- Teaching is good, and teachers provide you with interesting lessons.
- Those of you in Reception have settled into school well.
- Your behaviour and your attitudes to your work are good.
- You really enjoy the good range of activities that the school provides, such as visits and different clubs.
- You know about how important it is to eat healthy food and take exercise.
- The staff know you well and take great care of you.
- Your parents are very pleased with the school.

These are things the school has been asked to improve:

- Make sure that you are all given work that suits you and is hard enough for you.
- Provide you with clearer targets and comments in marking, to help you understand how to make your work even better.

You can help too, by telling your teacher if you think you could do more difficult work.

We wish you all good luck for the future.

Best wishes

Martin James Lead Inspector