

Blaby Stokes Church of England Primary School

Queen's Road, Blaby, Leicester, LE8 4EG

Inspection dates

6–7 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children get off to a good start in the two Reception classes where the good quality of education has been maintained since the previous inspection. Effective leadership ensures that teaching is consistently good and children make good progress.
- Pupils achieve well in English and mathematics by Year 6. Pupils of all ages do particularly well in reading because it is taught effectively throughout the school.
- Teaching is good. Most teachers plan work carefully for pupils of different abilities. However, teaching is sometimes not as effective as it could be in developing pupils' writing skills in Key Stage 2 or when lower-ability pupils are not taught by their teacher.
- Behaviour is good in lessons and around school. Pupils feel safe because of the caring, supportive atmosphere. They show respect for adults. Attendance varies but is broadly average so far this year.
- Leadership and management are good. The staff are highly motivated by the skills of the new headteacher and deputy headteacher. Half-termly checks on teaching and pupils' progress are bringing about rapid improvement.
- Governance is effective. The governors ask the senior leaders increasingly searching questions about the pace and level of improvement. This is enhancing the school's good capacity to go on improving.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in writing by Year 6 is not as good as it is in reading or mathematics as relatively few pupils attain above average standards. The written work of many pupils is not neat enough.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is not fast enough. Teaching for them is not effective enough in lessons when they work in groups with teaching assistants.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 20 lessons taught by 14 teachers. Three were joint observations with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. Inspectors discussed their findings in individual lessons with each of the teachers observed.
- Meetings were held with the pupils' council and a group of pupils in Key Stage 2, the Chair of the Governing Body and its vice-chair, and the headteacher and other leaders.
- A representative of the local authority was contacted by telephone to discuss the support and advice provided for the school.
- There were 21 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) by the end of the inspection. The inspectors also sought the views of parents and carers as they arrived at school.
- The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents including: the school's own data on pupils' recent and current progress; planning for school improvement; leaders' checking on teaching and pupils' progress; records relating to behaviour and attendance; and safeguarding records.

Inspection team

Joseph Peacock, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jo Curd

Additional Inspector

Michael Onyon

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. Pupils are almost all of White British heritage. Few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- There are 13 classes in two separate buildings on the same site. Six are in the Key Stage 1 building and seven in the Key Stage 2 building. All have single age groups except for the three classes covering Years 3 and 4 which have two age groups.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There have been significant staff changes over the past two years with a third of teachers joining the school in this period. A new headteacher started in January 2012 and a new deputy headteacher in September 2012.
- The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the usual times is typically in line with most other schools. However, a third of pupils who were in Year 6 in 2012 joined after Year 2.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement and the neatness of pupils' writing, especially in Key Stage 2, by;
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write in literacy sessions and in other subject areas
 - giving pupils clear guidance when marking their work on how to improve their writing and making sure they have the time to respond to this guidance
 - ensuring that senior leaders and subject leader regularly check on the quality of teaching and the progress all pupils are making in writing.
- Accelerate the progress of lower-attaining pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs in English and mathematics by:
 - planning tasks that are more closely matched to their ability levels and are suitably challenging
 - ensuring that teaching in lessons or groups with the teacher or teaching assistant is effective and provides pupils with the support they need to learn new work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When they join the Reception Year, children's skills and understanding are below what is typical for this age. Early writing skills, their language development and social skills are weaker areas. Consistently good teaching ensures children settle quickly and make good progress in these and all other areas of learning.
- Routines are quickly established in the caring and supportive atmosphere. Activities such as learning walks to find out about trees are enjoyable and add to the wide range of activities planned to promote learning. Modern technology is used extensively in promoting mathematical and creative skills. Outdoor learning is well planned for the smaller covered area with a wide range of independent activities but the larger outdoor area is under-used. Children use it at break times but equipment such as wheeled toys are not used very often.
- All children in the Reception Year and beyond benefit from daily sessions to learn letters and their sounds (phonics) and learn to read successfully. They make rapid progress in reading because they all have a good range of strategies to read unfamiliar words, such as sounding out letters or breaking longer words up into readable segments. In the Reception Year, children enjoyed doing actions to fit the different sounds of letters.
- By Year 6, standards are average in English and mathematics. Most pupils make good progress from their starting points. A strong emphasis on teaching reading skills throughout the school leads to consistently good progress and above average attainment by Year 6. Daily reading sessions are timetabled for all classes giving reading a high profile.
- Pupils' progress in writing is slower than in reading and mathematics. Weak writing skills are holding back standards in English. Long lesson introductions sometimes limit the time pupils have to write. Opportunities to practice writing skills in other subject areas are missed by some teachers in their planning. Neatness is an issue for pupils of all ability levels. Most have a sound understanding of spelling and punctuation but their handwriting is often untidy.
- Mathematics is a current focus for improvement and effective strategies such as the quick pace of mental mathematics sessions at the start of each lesson are giving pupils of all ages confidence with numbers and resulting in rapidly rising standards. All enjoy the competitive and fun element of these challenging sessions. A review of teaching, more practical sessions and the purchase of new mathematics textbooks ensures that girls and boys are doing equally well in mathematics.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs varies and is not fast enough. In many lessons, these pupils are taught by teaching assistants and their progress is slow. Some of their tasks, such as feeling the difference between two weights are not challenging enough for these and lower-attaining pupils.
- Individual help in lessons is well targeted towards pupils who are supported through pupil premium funding. As a result, almost all of these pupils are helped to maintain as good a rate of progress as other pupils. There is no significant gap between their attainment and that of other groups.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching and learning are mostly good. Teachers expect pupils to achieve well and match work closely to the full range of their ability levels. There is a good pace to learning in lessons, helped by pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour. Consequently, pupils in Key Stage 2 usually achieve well and are confident to move on to secondary school.
- Some weaknesses in teaching remain. Occasionally, lesson introductions are too long and the match of work for lower-attaining pupils is not as close or challenging as it could be. In almost all of the lessons observed, lower-attaining pupils and those who have special educational needs were selected to work with teaching assistants. In some of these groups, the pace of learning was too slow. Some teaching assistants did not demonstrate the necessary skills to question, challenge and develop new learning. Some were not deployed effectively by teachers and contributed little during over-long introductions.
- In the Reception classes, staff plan exciting activities for children to enjoy both indoors and outside, giving them a good start to school. Sharing equipment and working together on activities such as creating stickmen from twigs collected on their learning walk develops children's social skills well. Preparing for their nativity play showed how well behaved these children are.
- Teachers frequently check and accurately judge pupils' rates of progress. Most use the resulting information well to plan relevant tasks for pupils of different abilities. Pupils know their targets for learning and keenly check their own progress. Marking is usually thorough but does not always give pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work. Neatness is not reinforced in marking comments and so much of the work seen was untidy, especially pupils' written work.
- Pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills are usually developed well in lessons, with pupils often using computers to complete their work. Teachers miss opportunities for pupils to write at length in some subjects.
- In Key Stage 1, good teaching successfully promotes pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills. There is a steady upward trend in standards in all three subject areas.
- A good range of after-school clubs in sport, dance, computers and music contribute well to pupils' achievement and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Many pupils enjoy learning to play instruments such as violins, recorders and the Ukulele. Cross-country is very popular and well attended this term.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour around school is normally exceptionally good. Pupils are polite, get on well with one another and show respect for adults.
- In most of the lessons observed, pupils' behaviour was good. A few became bored when teachers talked for too long or tasks were not challenging enough but they did not disturb the concentration of others.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and enjoy coming to school. Parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) think that their children are happy and feel safe. All pupil councillors agreed with the comment that, 'there is always someone to look after you if you are upset'.
- Pupils say that they have no concerns about bullying as it very rarely happens. All have a good understanding of different types of bullying, such as making racist comments and name-calling.

- There have been hardly any exclusions since the last inspection. There is a caring, supportive atmosphere in school. All pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the school code of conduct and try to keep their class rules which successfully promote consideration for others.
- Behaviour is consistently well managed and any cases of inappropriate behaviour such as name-calling or finger gestures are dealt with immediately and effectively by staff. Mostly, pupils successfully sort out their disagreements by themselves.
- Attendance varies from year to year, sometimes being above average and sometimes below. Currently it is broadly average. The school staff do all they possibly can to promote good attendance and punctuality.

The leadership and management are good

- The new highly skilled headteacher has quickly formed a good working partnership with the new deputy headteacher, and together they are leading and inspiring staff to improve teaching and learning in order to raise standards.
- A revised management structure has given new responsibilities to all staff who have leadership roles. They evaluate the quality of teaching each half term and additionally drop in to lessons to check more informally on the quality of learning. The quality of the work of teaching assistants has not been fully evaluated. As a result, weaknesses in the way teaching assistants support pupils' learning has not been tackled robustly enough.
- Staff questionnaires show that some teaching assistants are less positive about their professional development than teachers. All staff have been galvanised into action to improve teaching and raise standards by the determined senior leadership team and the pace of change, is rapid. 'Twelve months work in six months' was how one member of staff explained how much the school has improved.
- Pay increases for staff are closely linked to their performance in ensuring pupils' successful learning and progress. Current national standards for teaching are applied in judging teaching quality. Support for the three newly qualified ensures that their teaching is consistently good.
- Pupils' attainment and progress are closely tracked throughout the school. This ensures prompt action is taken to help any pupils who are falling behind. The school does all it can to ensure all pupils have an equal opportunity to succeed, and refuses to accept discrimination of any kind.
- The local authority recognises that this is a rapidly improving school and provides as much support as the school requests. Periodically it checks the school's performance to ensure that it continues to improve.
- The subjects studied give pupils a wide range of learning experiences. Music, identified in a monitoring visit by Ofsted in June 2011 as inadequate, has been improved significantly. Many pupils learn to play an instrument and all classes feature music on their timetable. The choir is popular and singing is of a very high standard. Links to a charity supporting schools in India and learning to speak French raise pupils' cultural awareness. Religious studies and topics covering world religions give pupils a good understanding of their own and other faiths.
- The school works well with parents and carers, and most who responded to the online questionnaire were very positive about their children's experience at school. Others who spoke

with inspectors agreed that pupils are happy, and virtually all said that they would recommend the school to others.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance is effective because most governors visit regularly to find out for themselves how effectively the headteacher and staff are working. They agree a theme or focus for their visits and complete reports for staff and the governing body. Links are not always made to the key priorities that have been identified for improvement, missing the opportunity to give senior staff another view on the level of improvement. Each year the performance of the headteacher and all other teachers is checked using information about pupils' progress and standards achieved. Governors' own monitoring visits give them a good grasp on teaching quality. The pay of the headteacher and staff is linked closely to this evaluation process. All recently appointed governors have either attended training sessions or have sessions planned to enable them to be fully involved and effective in evaluating how well the school's performance compares to that of similar schools nationally. Financial resources, including pupil premium funding, are well managed. The additional staff, funded through the pupil premium, are ensuring that most pupils who are disadvantaged make at least expected and often good progress alongside others. The governing body has a good knowledge of child protection and safeguarding matters and all current national requirements relating to safeguarding are met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	120116
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	401908

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 of pupils on the school roll	348
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ruth Smith
Headteacher	Deirdre Kallquist
Date of previous school inspection	17 November 2009
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