

Blewbury Endowed CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123167
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	327861
Inspection dates	19-20 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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)	133
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Katheryn Fletcher
Headteacher	Ms Marion Mills
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2006
School address	Westbrook Street Blewbury Didcot OX11 9QB
Telephone number	01235 850411
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This below average sized primary school serves, in the main, the villages of Blewbury and Upton, although a few pupils travel from a further distance. Almost all the pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties, mainly concerning their reading and writing skills, is about half the national average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are taught in a separate Reception class. The school has gained a number of awards, most notably the Healthy School Award and the International School Award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Blewbury is a good school where pupils achieve well. It has some significant strengths. Pupils in all year groups are eager to learn, enjoy coming to school and behave exceptionally well. They thrive in their personal development which is outstanding. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive and pleased that they have chosen the school. The many positive views expressed are summed up by the parent who wrote, 'My children find the school provides a happy learning environment and we are lucky to have it in the village.' There have been many improvements in the school's provision and standards since the previous inspection and these demonstrate a good capacity for further improvement.

Standards are above average. Children enter the school with skills that are in line with those expected. They make good progress in the EYFS because provision is good. Good progress is maintained in Years 1 and 2 and standards at the end of Year 2 are slightly above average in reading and writing. In mathematics, they are above average. Because pupils progress well in Key Stage 2, standards are above average by the time they leave Year 6. Provisional results in the 2008 national tests at the end of Year 6 show standards that are above average in English, mathematics and science. However, test results show that there is a difference in the standards of reading and writing at the end of Year 6. The school has recognised this difference and, as a result of well-founded improvement projects, the gap is closing. Even though standards in English are above average, the school is keenly aware of the need to remove the weakness and further accelerate progress in writing to make sure that as many pupils attain the higher level in this aspect as they do in reading. Current Year 6 pupils are achieving well and are on track to attain the targets set for them and to improve on the current above-average standards.

Pupils achieve well because teaching and learning are of consistently good quality and some lessons are outstanding. All groups of pupils achieve well. Teachers are skilled in ensuring that pupils are clear about what is to be learned, they invariably set interesting and challenging activities that are well matched to pupils' interests and learning needs, and they choose the best teaching method to use. As one school councillor said, 'We learn well by playing games and dealing with tricky problems.' The excellent curriculum is a key factor in securing good achievement. It captures pupils' enthusiasm for learning and their thirst for knowledge. In addition, care, guidance and support are outstanding. All the adults ensure that there is an excellent ethos for learning because they take good care of the pupils, and support their social and emotional needs exceptionally well.

There has been a marked improvement in the quality of leadership and management since the previous inspection. This is now good. The headteacher provides clear educational direction for the school and she is supported well by the senior leadership team and other staff. The staff work closely as a team and enjoy taking responsibility for the myriad of developments in the school. As a result, morale is high and all teachers with responsibilities make a good contribution to the good quality procedures in place to check provision and standards. Governance is satisfactory. Governors have some understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, but are over-reliant on the headteacher for the information they receive. They do not spend enough time in school to provide a sufficiently strong lead in school improvement. Much of the impetus for this comes from the headteacher.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enjoy their time in the Reception class because the provision is of good quality. The curriculum is varied and captures the children's interests. It allows them to explore and investigate for themselves both in the classroom and outdoors. Staff are skilled at noting children's progress and making sure that activities provided are matched well to their abilities. In addition, a good balance is provided between activities led by staff and those that the children choose for themselves. Children enter with skills that are broadly in line with those expected and achieve well in all areas. They achieve particularly well in their personal, social and emotional development because they are exceptionally well supported by the staff. As a result, the children's personal development and well-being are outstanding. Children are confident and secure. They enjoy working together, such as when they made what one boy called a 'double

decker-decker' bus in the outdoor learning area from crates and tyres. Another affirmed, 'Well done!' when the boy managed to lift more crates into place! Leadership and management are effective. The recently appointed EYFS leader has an excellent knowledge of child development and, with a strong team, she has ensured that all new curriculum requirements are met in full.

What the school should do to improve further

- Embed the current improvement projects to speed progress in writing in order to close the gap between pupils' attainment in reading and writing at the end of Year 6.
- Strengthen the role of governors by ensuring that governors visit the school more regularly and that they make use of information gained to develop their role further in the school improvement process.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The differences in the levels of achievement across the school found at the time of the previous inspection have been ironed out and pupils make consistently good progress in all classes. This has resulted in an improvement in standards at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6. Standards in English and mathematics are above average, although more pupils gain the higher level in reading than in writing. Pupils who find learning hard are supported well. Because there are good systems for checking pupils' progress, any pupils who may slip behind are quickly identified. Their needs, in both reading and writing, are met well and they make good progress towards their individual targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Pupils in Year 6 develop into mature and reflective young people who genuinely care about others and their environment. They celebrate their own culture very well and, because there are many opportunities to visit other countries and to receive pupils from many European countries, they develop a good understanding of other cultures. Members of the school eco-council, for example, visited France to meet with eco-councils from schools in Sweden, the Czech Republic, Poland and France. Together these pupils designed an eco-charter that has been adopted by all the pupils.

Parents were unanimous in saying that their children enjoy school and this is reflected in the exceptionally high levels of attendance. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the need to lead healthy lifestyles. This is shown in both the Healthy School Award and also the enthusiasm that the pupils show towards the many opportunities they have for sports and games. Pupils are proud of their contribution to the school and to the lives of others through membership of the influential school council and eco-councils and also through the money that they raise for charities both in England and abroad. They thrive on the many opportunities that they have to take responsibility, and this supports their high levels of social awareness. Pupils also have a well-developed sense of how to stay safe, including understanding the caution required when researching on the internet. They are prepared well for their move to secondary school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is consistently good and, occasionally, outstanding. Teachers know the pupils well, have high expectations of them and plan work well that matches their individual needs and capabilities. Pupils benefit from the imaginative and challenging tasks that capture their attention and enthusiasm. In addition, they have many opportunities to contribute their own ideas to the themes being studied. Although in the past there has been some lack of challenge for the more able pupils, this is not now the case. Teachers have worked hard to ensure that their assessments are used well to plan future activities. Teachers are enthusiastic in grasping new ideas to boost achievement and this has resulted in changes in the teaching of literacy. These have included teachers making sure that the context for writing is made more purposeful by providing a reason for writing that is often part of the topic theme being studied. In addition, the rigorous focus on teaching letters and sounds is having an impact on pupils' writing particularly for children in Years 1-3. This is starting to ensure that all groups of pupils achieve as well in writing as they do in reading although this needs to be consistently embedded across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

There have been improvements in the curriculum since the previous inspection. The school provides an exceptional curriculum, which supports fully all aspects of the pupils' learning and personal development. It builds very well on their prior knowledge in literacy, numeracy, science and information and communication technology (ICT). It also contributes well to the development of high standards of social and emotional maturity because the personal, social and emotional curriculum is of good quality. The curriculum has been effectively remodelled since the previous inspection, and has resulted in teachers' plans linking subjects together. This means that pupils have more opportunities to implement skills learned in one subject when working in another. This is evident in the many high-quality displays around the school. The school emphasis on the international dimension is a great strength. This is acknowledged in the school gaining International School Award status for the third time. Pupils are given many opportunities to visit schools and families in many European countries and to host foreign visitors, and this broadens their horizons and excites and interests the pupils. The curriculum is exceptionally well enriched by a wide range of visits that support learning, including residential visits for all Key Stage 2 pupils, and also by visitors to the school. There is a good emphasis on the arts, particularly music, which successfully encourages pupils to develop their specific talents and interests.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides a safe, secure environment in which all adults ensure that pupils are well cared for. Pupils are very happy. They know that any incidence of inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with by staff swiftly and constructively. Robust systems safeguard pupils and promote a high level of health and safety. Good support for pupils with learning difficulties enables them to make good progress, and the school's strong partnership with outside agencies benefits pupils' learning and attitudes. Teachers know pupils exceptionally well and they guide them very effectively through their comments for improvement in marking and by setting challenging learning targets. Pupils say they find these helpful because it helps them to understand what they need to do to improve. The monitoring of pupils' progress is thorough. It is carefully tracked, and any pupils in danger of falling behind are quickly identified and extra support is provided.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, is committed to its continuing improvement and provides good leadership. Teachers with responsibilities take their duties seriously and make a good contribution to the school's good monitoring and evaluation procedures. They are exceptionally good at promoting equal opportunities and eliminating discrimination by raising the pupils' expectations and providing good quality tasks for them. The result of this good leadership is that there has been an improvement in the school's standards and provision, and in pupils' achievement since the previous inspection.

The school's community cohesion is of outstanding quality. The school has very close links with the local community through its involvement in many village activities. In addition, the school eco-council has supported the parish council in developing new signposts. The excellent partnership with the local federation of schools has benefited pupils, staff and their counterparts in other schools. The outstanding emphasis on global development has enabled the pupils to have a highly developed sense of the importance of global understanding. All these factors have had a positive impact on the pupils' progress, both personal and academic, and have also broadened the horizons of the staff.

Governance is satisfactory. Although the governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths they are not sufficiently involved in the strategic management of school improvement. Even though a good start has been made by governors supporting the development of a strategic plan, they visit the school too infrequently to enable them to check for themselves how well the school is doing.

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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?	1
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?	1
How effectively are the children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
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 disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

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

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.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

² IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

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 interest of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
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	3
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



Letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection.

03 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blewbury Endowed CofE Primary School, Didcot, OX11 9QB

I am writing to let you know what I found when I visited your school. Thank you for helping me so well and making me welcome. I really enjoyed talking with you and I was particularly impressed with your eco-charter and hearing about how much you enjoy having children and teachers from schools in other countries to visit as well as visiting them yourselves. I can see why you enjoy school so much because yours is a good school. These are the things that I liked the most.

- You make good progress in your learning, thoroughly enjoy school, behave exceptionally well and want to do your best.
- The staff support you well and those of you that do not find learning easy are given good support.
- The school makes sure that you are safe and very well looked after.
- There is an excellent range of things for you to do and teachers plan all the subjects exceptionally well to make learning interesting for you.
- You know the importance of eating the right things and staying fit and healthy.
- Your teachers do a good job. Teaching is good and you enjoy learning.
- Your headteacher is doing a good job too. She is supported very well by all the other adults in the school.

I have asked the school to continue to focus on two particular things:

- to make sure that by the end of Year 6 you do equally well in writing as you do in reading
- to encourage your governors to come and visit you in school more often so that they can play their part in helping your school to become even better.

You can help by making sure you work as hard as possible, particularly with your writing, while continuing to enjoy school.

With best wishes.

Yours faithfully

Keith Sadler

Lead Inspector