

Bledlow Ridge School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110209
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	337450
Inspection dates	15–16 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Sheila Nolan

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 of pupils on the school roll	139
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Dougall
Headteacher	Miss R T Rochefort
Date of previous school inspection	22–23 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited eight lessons, observed seven teachers and had meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors looked at sports day on the second day of the inspection. They observed the school's work, looked at the school's self-evaluation documentation, monitoring and assessment information, lesson plans and school policies. Inspectors analysed 84 questionnaires from parents and carers, 79 from pupils and 12 from staff. The school's safeguarding procedures were also evaluated.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how well the school has sustained the historically high performance of the pupils
- the effectiveness of the school's systems in raising the attainment of those few individuals who are making no better than the expected progress
- how well the school has sustained good teaching given the recent turnover of staff
- the school's progress in improving the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

This oversubscribed village school serves an area where families are mainly of White British heritage. Around one in ten of the pupils come from minority ethnic groups, a much lower proportion than that found nationally. A quarter of the children in the Reception Year, however, are from other than European backgrounds, although none are at the early stages of learning English. The overall proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is low but these pupils are not spread evenly across year groups. Very few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. Since the last inspection, the school has gained a number of awards, including that for Healthy Schools and silver status on the School Travel Plan.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Bledlow Ridge is an outstanding school. The really special feature of the school is that it has sustained its high expectations of the pupils and staff over many years. Since the last inspection, results in the national tests have continued to rise in both English and mathematics. More than treble the proportion of pupils compared with that expected nationally reaches the highest available levels at the end of Year 6 in most years. Provisional information for 2010 indicates even better performance overall. The majority of pupils make exceptionally fast progress. Those with specific learning needs also make faster progress than previously, with no pupil gaining less than the expected Level 4 in each of English, mathematics and science. One parent wrote, reflecting the views of most, 'Our children get a jump start at Bledlow Ridge.'

The excellent curriculum, the high quality of care, guidance and support and pupils' high personal motivation are at the heart of the pupils' success. These outstanding features, together with strong parental support, result from senior leaders' ongoing drive and ambition to do the best for the pupils. Self-evaluation is rigorous, honest and accurate. The school judges itself harshly against its very high expectations. The school, over many years, has demonstrated its excellent capacity to go on improving. Because of the excellent senior leadership and management, outstanding academic performance has been maintained in spite of staff turnover and inexperienced staff. This has been achieved through well-considered professional development that has ensured that teaching is at least good and is sometimes outstanding, and because the school's scholarly ethos has supported the pupils' efforts.

The school has developed well on other fronts since the last inspection, including ensuring that each individual's learning needs are met, especially for those with challenging histories or medical issues. The school has developed strong and very effective partnerships with external agencies to support vulnerable pupils and their families. Pupils' awareness of healthy lifestyles, their contribution to the school and local community and the preparation for their future lives are all outstanding and they have high attendance. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The school does acknowledge inspectors' findings that the teachers' regular marking of pupils' work has too little impact as pupils do not consistently respond to the guidance that is given. The Early Years Foundation Stage has improved since the last inspection. There are many more opportunities for children to explore the world around them in the stimulating outside environment. However, there is, at times, an imbalance between adult-directed and free-choice activities, with too little choice for children.

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Pupils of all ages at Bledlow Ridge genuinely enjoy learning and feel very safe in the school. They have the personal space to develop their undoubted talents because of their confidence in their teachers. Pupils' willingness to look out for others and their sense of fair play were demonstrated clearly during sports day. 'Everyone around the school is cheerful, including teachers. We care for each other and we all take responsibility for sorting problems,' commented the articulate and mature school council members.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sustain the high quality outcomes for the pupils and increase the proportion of outstanding classroom practice by:
 - ensuring that pupils make the best possible use of teachers' guidance in the marking of written work so that errors are routinely corrected and suggestions acted upon
 - developing further the new and successful leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage so that staff are more confident in encouraging children's free choice of activity.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

The quality of learning and progress in lessons is regularly outstanding because pupils are genuinely eager to learn. This was particularly evident in a Year 2 lesson where pupils were classifying leaves. They thoroughly enjoyed the wide range of activities, including the leaf hunt outdoors, the discussions and presentations and the information from the internet. Pupils were excited to apply their literacy skills well in making their posters and in reading and following their hunt instructions. Pupils' motivation to learn is high and this underpins their very good progress. Year 4 in their film poster reviews and Year 6 in their financial management work displayed an excellent range of vocabulary as well as very secure number skills.

Regularly, attainment is high at the end of Year 6. Pupils do exceptionally well in English, mathematics and science. All groups of pupils, both boys and girls, make fast progress. Able pupils make exceptionally rapid progress. Historically, the few pupils with specific learning and medical needs have not made the same fast rate of progress as their peers. However, this year, the school's refined systems for checking their learning and progress indicate they are making more than the expected progress in all areas of learning.

Pupils behave outstandingly well, get on together and are exceptionally enthusiastic about engaging in the many opportunities to take on responsibilities. Older pupils are particularly proud of their roles as junior road safety officers and as helpers in the 'Huff Puff' play scheme. Younger pupils act as safe play helpers and monitors in class, and also participate in the all-year school council. All year groups report feeling very safe in school and have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy. Sport is a high priority as is diet, highlighted for the pupils through the Healthy

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Schools award. All pupils are very proud of their school and generally help to ensure that every individual, including the most vulnerable, can share in their activities. This is reflected in high attendance and excellent punctuality. The pupils’ understanding of the diversity of society is good. They make the most of musical and artistic events that enable them to mix with other groups across the county and of their links with inner-city schools. Pupils are extremely well prepared for their future lives, combining high academic attainment with very good personal development.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils’ behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

As a result of well-targeted training and rigorous systems to monitor and evaluate classroom practice, the school has sustained consistently good and often outstanding teaching despite the high turnover of staff. An ethos of high expectations permeates the school and this is reflected in imaginative classroom environments which are enriched by exciting displays that catch the pupils’ interests and often lead to independent research. In an excellent lesson looking at cinema posters, younger pupils were able to present their posters, justifying their choices very coherently and using a surprisingly sophisticated range of vocabulary. Working relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and this supports the learning process well. Most teachers have strong subject knowledge and many use new technologies effectively to enliven lessons. Despite these strong features, and although pupils’ work is marked regularly, not all teachers ensure that pupils respond to their written comments or pay attention to their guidance on correcting errors, thus helpful learning opportunities are missed. Occasionally, teachers’ explanations are too long

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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and some pupils, especially those who find learning more of a struggle, lose concentration.

The excellent curriculum is also a major factor in the sustained high performance of the pupils, as is the high quality of care guidance and support. Cross-curricular links are particularly strong, enabling pupils to apply their basic skills in a range of exciting contexts. A wide variety of out-of-hours learning and enrichment opportunities are enjoyed by the pupils who often involve their families in their tasks, as, for example, in the Second World War projects. Learning through music is especially important in the school. The well-supported school clubs range from sports activities to French and Spanish classes, choir and street jazz. The school is totally committed to looking after the well-being of its pupils. It ensures that its vulnerable pupils and their families are very well supported in school and by its many external partners. Specially individualised lunches, for example, are made daily to accommodate the needs of some pupils. Pupils new to the school or those moving on to new schools are guided well through the excellent transition arrangements that include staff and pupils' visits and the very clear identification of any specific need, be it learning, medical or social.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

High attainment and rapid progress in learning have been sustained at Bledlow Ridge because of the dedication and determination of the headteacher and her senior leaders. The leadership team's consistently high expectations, which are communicated to new as well as established staff, have maintained the school as an exceptionally purposeful place for pupils to enjoy learning. The school strives to ensure that every pupil has an equal chance to learn and rigorously tackles any discrimination. Increasingly, middle leaders are using information on pupils' performance well to ensure that every pupil makes the very best possible progress, especially those with specific learning difficulties. Governors support the school effectively, using their wide-ranging expertise to promote excellence in all aspects of school life. Although governors do challenge and question the school robustly, they do not always pick up in enough detail on issues related to the progress of groups of pupils.

All requirements in relation to the safeguarding of the pupils are in line with recommended good practice. The school recognises, however, that the arrangements

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for pupils to cross the road, albeit a very quiet one, from the bus drop-off point would benefit from greater adult supervision first thing in the morning. The school has been very successful in forging strong partnerships with external agencies to promote pupils' welfare. It is effective, too, in engaging parents in the life of the school, even when it cannot take on board all of their suggestions and ideas. The school has thoroughly analysed the impact of its work to promote community cohesion, locally, nationally and internationally. It forms a genuinely harmonious community in which pupils from different backgrounds get on noticeably well both within the school and in the many and varied external events. Nevertheless, it has yet to make full use of links with communities overseas so that pupils can communicate directly with their peers, for example in the partner schools in India.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

When children join the Reception class, their skills and understanding are in line with expectations for their age. Many already have experience of pre-school settings. They make good progress in all areas of learning but particularly in developing their personal qualities. They play well on their own but also mix well with each other, whatever their backgrounds and traditions. They feel safe and happy because of the warm relationships with adults. Most are keen to take on small class responsibilities and develop their independence. By the time, children join Year 1, their skills are generally just above average.

The new leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage has successfully developed the areas identified at the previous inspection and is now good. Teaching is good and the learning environment is lively and colourful. Children enjoy a wide range of stimulating activities, indoors and out, carefully chosen to reflect their interests.

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Although often children are given the opportunity to select their own activities, there are times when there is an imbalance between adult-led and free-choice learning. The new leadership is aware that staff need to become more confident in encouraging children’s free choice of activity. Children’s progress is carefully monitored and this contributes to the high-quality care they receive. There are highly effective home-school links, with parents working cooperatively with the school to ensure the children’s best interests.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The school enjoys the support of the majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaires. Almost all respondents judged that their children enjoy school and that it keeps them safe. Inspectors agree. A small number expressed a concern that reports did not include details about attainment as well as effort. Inspectors and the school agree that this should be so, and steps are in hand to make improvements to the reports. A few others consider that the school does not listen to their views. Inspectors do not agree with them. Their views are taken into account but it is not always possible for the school to act upon them as not all suggestions are always in the best interests of the whole community.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bledlow Ridge School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 84 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 145 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	59	70	21	25	3	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	66	79	18	21	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	37	44	41	49	5	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	52	62	26	31	5	6	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	55	65	25	30	4	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	42	50	32	38	6	7	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	55	65	25	30	4	5	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	53	63	31	37	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	51	61	24	29	6	7	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	49	58	28	33	6	7	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	37	44	35	42	8	10	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	62	74	20	24	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	61	73	18	21	4	5	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.

16 July 2010



Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bledlow Ridge School, High Wycombe HP14 4AZ

Thank you for your courtesy and kindness to us when we visited your school recently. We found that you were very well behaved and really keen on learning. You clearly love your school and are proud of each other's achievements as you attend so well. Thank you to those of you who were able to take the time to talk to us.

Your teachers have worked really hard to make sure you do as well as you possibly can. You go to an exceptionally good school and are very fortunate to be so well looked after. Congratulations to you all on your excellent progress over the school year and to all of you who took part enthusiastically in sports day, despite the inclement weather.

With the guidance of your outstandingly committed headteacher, we clearly want your school to continue doing what it does so well – preparing you for the next stage of your education. There are just one or two things that we would like you and your teachers to think about to make the school even better. In the Reception class, adults need to give the children more freedom to choose their own activities. We would also like you to respond regularly to teachers' marking of your written work. Some of you do not deal with your errors or record your understanding of what went wrong. This is a waste of a good opportunity to improve your academic work even more and does not make the best use of teachers' marking.

It was a pleasure sharing your school with you. Some of you are moving on to other schools, mostly for your secondary education. I am sure you will remember with affection all that Bledlow Ridge has done for you.

We would like to wish you continuing success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Nolan
Lead Inspector

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