

Inspection of a good school: Blackmore Primary School

Nine Ashes Road, Blackmore, Ingatestone, Essex CM4 0QR

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 June 2021

Outcome

Blackmore Primary School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that one or more areas may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Blackmore Primary is a safe, stimulating, and enjoyable place to be. Pupils' behaviour is exceptional. They are taught the routines and expectations of them and how to be respectful towards staff and each other. Pupils say they feel very safe in school and that, 'bullying doesn't happen here'.

Leaders ensure that pupils experience a broad curriculum and a wide range of activities and visits that enriches their learning and enjoyment of school. All parents who shared their views during the inspection would recommend the school to others.

Early reading and mathematics are taught effectively. Staff work together as a team to ensure that all pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), gain the knowledge and skills they need for the next stage of their education.

Leaders have introduced a new, ambitious curriculum to raise pupils' aspirations and broaden their horizons. Restrictions due to COVID-19 (coronavirus) has slowed its implementation. New plans are in place, but teachers' use of these plans remains underdeveloped in some subjects. More time is needed for the curriculum to become fully established and ensure that learning builds on what pupils already can do and enables them to learn more and remember more.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Reading is taught consistently. All staff adopt the same approach to teaching pupils the phonics knowledge they need. Very regular assessments ensure that those in need of additional support get the help they need. Teaching assistants follow the same procedures as teachers. Staff are skilled in helping pupils become fluent and confident readers. The least able readers in key stage 2 are provided with daily catch-up sessions. Reading has a

high profile. Books are carefully selected for younger pupils matched to their knowledge. Older pupils make regular use of the library to select books to read for pleasure.

In mathematics, all staff use the age-related guidance and a range of practical resources to enable pupils to learn. Training for staff has helped teachers to understand what they should be teaching and when, so that pupils build on what they have already learned. Assessments of gaps in pupils' learning have informed changes to the curriculum. Some classes are revisiting learning to help them catch up. At times, more challenge could be added for the most able pupils.

Support for pupils with SEND is well organised. Clear procedures are in place to identify pupils' needs and put in place plans to monitor their progress. Pupils benefit greatly from one-to-one support provided by teaching assistants. Pupils' needs are known well, and the curriculum is adapted to ensure they access all of the curriculum.

In lessons, pupils are attentive and keen to learn. Outside, pupils of all ages enjoy gathering in friendship groups and playing games together. Records show few incidents of poor behaviour occur. Pupils, parents, and staff agree that pupils are kept free from all forms of bullying.

The school has a caring and supportive ethos. Pupils gain an understanding of themselves and others through weekly personal, social and health education lessons. They talked enthusiastically about the sporting activities and off-site trips provided for them. School councillors and eco-council members make a good contribution to school life.

The new curriculum is bold and ambitious. Leaders acknowledge that it is new and has not been fully evaluated to ensure it leads to improvement. Curriculum intent is much clearer but planning in some subjects is more developed than others. Implementing these plans is dependent on how teachers interpret them to teach content in a sequential way. For example, in physical education, although the subject leader has worked hard to provide clear guidance and training for teachers, some staff do not have the subject knowledge needed to plan learning well enough. Leaders acknowledge that the new curriculum is a top priority.

In discussion with the headteacher, we agreed that leaders' monitoring and evaluation may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All of the necessary checks are made and recorded when appointing adults to work with children. All staff are aware that safeguarding pupils is everyone's responsibility. Staff know the procedures to follow if they have a concern. Several staff are trained as designated safeguarding leads. Since returning to school after successive national lockdowns, new provision has been made to oversee pupils' mental health and welfare. A drop-in service operates in school, twice a week, for pupils who have concerns and want

to talk to an adult. A consultant visits school each week to run mindfulness sessions for selected pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Continue to implement the new curriculum so that it becomes firmly established across all subjects, and that this is evaluated fully to gauge the impact the new curriculum is having on pupils' progress and their wider personal development.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good school could now be better than good, or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 12 July 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school [here](#).

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	114929
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10193966
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	172
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Peter Snelling
Acting Headteacher	Val Wisdom
Website	www.blackmore.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 July 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Blackmore Primary is a smaller-than-average school maintained by the local authority. The proportion of pupils with SEND, mostly moderate learning difficulties or speech, language and communication needs, is below average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is below average. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium is below average. The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- The school is part of the Brentwood Collaborative Partnership.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school, and has taken that into account in their evaluation.
- The inspector met with the substantial and acting headteachers, a range of middle leaders, a selection of teachers and teaching assistants, six members of the governing body and a group of pupils.

- The inspector did deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, and physical education. The deep dives included discussions with subject leaders, visits to lessons, meetings with pupils and teachers, and scrutinising pupils' work.
- The inspector focused on four other aspects of the school's work: safeguarding, pupils' wider development, staff workload, and gaming and off-rolling.

Inspection team

John Mitcheson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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