

# The Bliss Charity School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	122048
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	327630
<b>Inspection date</b>	8 July 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Rajinder Harrison

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	150
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sarah Crourear
<b>Headteacher</b>	Christopher Scanlan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 June 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	The Green Nether Heyford Northampton NN7 3LE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01327 340758
<b>Fax number</b>	01327 342341

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The school has an average proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs and with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These pupils' needs cover a wide range, but are mainly in the category of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and moderate learning difficulties.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage start school in the Reception/Year 1 class.

## 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. Outstanding personal development is reflected in pupils' love of learning, their exemplary behaviour and good attendance. Pupils form excellent relationships and are confident that staff will listen to them if they have any worries. Their contributions to the community and respect for the cultures and traditions of communities in the wider world are outstanding. The school's calm and supportive ethos helps pupils feel safe, well cared for and valued. Pastoral care arrangements are good. Teachers provide pupils with effective guidance to help them improve their work and encourage parents to take an active role in helping their children learn at home. Parents are extremely positive about the school. 'It's fantastic and my child loves it here,' is a view expressed by many.

Pupils achieve well across the school. Children generally start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with attainment levels typical for their age, although aspects of their literacy and numeracy skills are not always as secure. Interesting activities and experiences and good teaching help them develop confidence and independence in their learning. By the end of the Reception year, children attain above average standards in all but their writing and calculation skills. While overall progress is good, it is not consistently so in every class and in every subject. Overall standards are above average at the end of Years 2 and 6. Pupils progress well and attain above average standards in reading, mathematics and science. Standards in writing are average rather than good because pupils do not have enough opportunities to write independently and at length. Throughout the school, while most pupils achieve well, more able pupils do not always work to their full capability. In most lessons, teachers accommodate pupils' differing needs well to ensure they learn effectively. Teaching is good overall. However, occasionally teachers are not sufficiently demanding of the more able. In these lessons, the pace of learning is satisfactory rather than good. Pupils who find learning difficult receive good support to help them achieve well. A good curriculum, enriched with extensive additional activities, enhances the learning of all pupils.

Good leadership and management ensure the school's continued improvement. The headteacher involves all staff and governors in identifying improvement priorities and reviewing the impact of the decisions taken to develop provision. Pupils' progress is monitored well and most pupils are challenged appropriately. Senior leaders recognise that while overall standards are good, progress is better in some classes than others and that writing continues to be an issue. Nevertheless, they are accurate in evaluating the quality of the school's work and have taken effective steps to improve teaching and assessment procedures. Governors are extremely supportive and highly effective in monitoring the school's performance. The school promotes excellent links with parents, the local community and communities in many other parts of the world. Senior leaders ensure the school has good capacity to make further improvements.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage because teaching is good. Staff plan activities that encourage enthusiasm for learning, particularly the outside areas where children love to explore and discover independently. Children work in a safe and secure environment and staff provide the right care and support to help them gain confidence quickly. Clear routines, high expectations and effective staff deployment help children achieve well. Staff intervene sensitively to support those who need additional help in their learning and make sure all children

try everything. Children are happy at school and form excellent relationships with others. Their behaviour is exemplary. Parents express very positive views about the school, with comments such as, 'My child loves everything about school and is so happy here.' Parents are confident they can discuss any concerns with staff and say that staff are very helpful. Good links with most of the pre-school providers ensure children build successfully on what they have already achieved.

Leadership and management are good. Children's progress is monitored closely and assessments are used well to match activities to children's needs. Children respond enthusiastically in discussions, sometimes adult-led and often child-initiated. They say school is fun and love, for example, growing vegetables that they cook and eat or sell to local people. Their curiosity is further extended through searching for 'mini-beasts' in the wild areas and imaginative play in the outside classroom that is extremely well resourced. Children's literacy and numeracy skills are often weaker when they start school. These are taught particularly well, with a positive effect on standards and progress. However, on occasions, the more able children are not challenged enough to extend their learning.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure pupils have sufficient opportunities to write independently and at length in order to increase achievement and raise standards in writing.
- Ensure that teachers plan work that challenges more able pupils consistently in every class.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

The good achievement seen in the Early Years Foundation Stage is maintained in Years 1 to 6. Pupils make good progress overall. Targets for each pupil are reasonably challenging, and in most classes teachers ensure pupils attain these targets. In Year 2, pupils are working at above average levels in reading, writing and mathematics. This is an improvement on the teacher assessments of the Year 2 pupils in 2008. Pupils in Year 6 are working at above average levels in reading, mathematics and science. This too shows standards have improved since 2008. Standards in writing are not as high as in reading, mathematics and science. The school has introduced effective strategies to remedy this but the impact is not yet evident, particularly in pupils' achievement at Key Stage 2. At both key stages, although more able pupils achieve at least satisfactorily, they could do better. Pupils who find learning difficult are well supported and achieve well.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils enjoy many responsibilities around the school and as school councillors. They show enterprise by selling plants they have grown to raise funds and decide on improvements, such as the school grounds. Older pupils act as 'buddies' to support younger ones and sports leaders ensure pupils play sensibly and safely. Pupils are extremely kind and quick to help anyone who is upset. They say there is no bullying and any disagreements are resolved quickly. Year 6 pupils express regret at having to leave as they say, 'It's so friendly here', but they feel ready to move on.

Pupils make an excellent contribution to the community by running coffee mornings, supporting decisions regarding public play areas, and recycling because, they say, 'We have to look after

the planet.' Their excellent understanding of why adopting healthy lifestyles is important is reflected in many selecting healthy lunches and attending the numerous sports clubs the school offers. Pupils' enjoyment of school is extensively enriched by many visits and visitors. Residential visits, including abroad, help pupils appreciate their place in the world and how they can contribute as young citizens. While pupils' understanding of a British community that is different to theirs is less well developed, they know that differences should be valued and respected. Their outstanding personal skills and good achievement means they are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils learn effectively because teaching is generally good. The typically good lessons are planned well to meet pupils' needs. Many include practical tasks where pupils have to think and explore independently. Teachers are especially successful at providing good opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas and pupils respond enthusiastically in lively question-and-answer sessions. They particularly enjoy an element of competition, for example, mental mathematics activities and 'beat the clock' sound recognition tasks, where they try hard to improve their previous performance. Teachers use interactive whiteboards well to present information visually so that pupils, particularly those who find learning difficult, learn effectively. Skilled support staff help groups and individual pupils participate effectively. Occasionally teachers keep the class together for too long and direct learning too much. There are times when the more able pupils are not always extended enough, particularly in their independent writing.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum, enriched by excellent activities that include sport, French and drama, is well structured and planned effectively. It often integrates many subjects so that pupils can make better sense of their learning. For example, history, music and drama are skilfully woven together in the pupils' production of *The Tempest*, bringing Shakespeare alive for modern audiences. While this integration of subjects works well for most pupils, in that they see the relevance of what they learn from day to day, this approach does not always allow pupils enough time to extend their creative, independent writing skills. Provision for information and communication technology is good and teachers use it well for both teaching and learning. Curriculum planning includes effective intervention activities and support for pupils who need extra help or who fall behind in their targets. An excellent programme for personal, social and health education that permeates many subjects supports pupils' personal development very effectively. Many visitors, clubs and visits, such as to Sweden, Romania and France, make learning come alive for pupils as they explore and discover.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Care arrangements are very good. Child protection, health and safety and safeguarding procedures meet requirements. The school considers pupils' individual needs sensitively and excellent links with parents ensure everyone is kept fully informed about pupils' well-being. Staff take prompt action if pupils raise any concerns and consult external agencies where

necessary. Pupils, particularly those with emotional and social difficulties and those who have specific learning difficulties, receive the additional support they need to participate successfully.

Academic guidance is good. Pupils' progress is tracked effectively and guides future planning. All pupils have individual targets in literacy and understand what they have to do to attain these. However, this level of guidance is not as evident in other subjects. Teachers mark work regularly and offer detailed supportive comments that help pupils to improve their work.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher, staff and governors ensure the school is a happy, safe place where pupils learn effectively. Excellent partnerships with parents and the local community support pupils' learning well. The headteacher, supported by a good leadership team, is determined to ensure pupils achieve the best they can. Despite the few occasions when more able pupils are not provided with sufficient challenge, the school effectively promotes equality of opportunity. Staff have established a reliable assessment system to monitor pupils' progress. Consequently, standards have improved in mathematics and science this year. The school recognises that targets in writing are still not high enough. Very good links with partner primary schools help staff explore strategies to improve provision. Governors are very astute in their understanding of the school's work and continually probe to ensure decisions are the right ones to bring about the necessary improvements, for example in teaching. They provide excellent support and challenge. They are extremely well informed of developments because they carry out regular monitoring visits to check the impact of actions taken and discuss findings with the headteacher and other key leaders. The school's promotion of community cohesion is outstanding. Excellent links with the local community and with communities that represent a wider range of ethnic, religious and social backgrounds in other countries ensure pupils have a very good understanding of and respect for the world beyond Nether Heyford.

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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 are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are 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 <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	2

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	1
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****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

9 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Bliss Charity School, Nether Heyford NN7 3LE

Thank you for the very warm and friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed being in your school and, with your help, we learnt a great deal about your school. We particularly loved your outdoor areas where you grow so many lovely flowers and vegetables and were very impressed that you raised so much money by selling some of your plants.

You go to a good school. Here are some of the things your school does well.

- Your behaviour is outstanding and you make really good friends there.
- The school's excellent links with other countries are helping you to understand and appreciate how people's lives there differ from yours.
- You achieve well and reach above average standards in reading, mathematics and science.
- Children in the Reception class have fun in their learning and do well.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and healthy.
- Your lessons are interesting. You enjoy learning and you are taught well.
- You learn well in many of your subjects and enjoy many other excellent activities. Your production of *The Tempest* was really exciting.
- You know your literacy targets and your teachers are good at helping you improve your work.
- The staff take good care of you.
- All the staff work well to make sure you have a good education.
- Your headteacher is good at leading the school and knows how to make it even better. The governors do an excellent job in helping him.

We have identified two key things that your school could do to improve further.

- Make sure you have more opportunities to write independently and at length so that you make better progress and attain higher standards in writing.
- Make sure teachers in every class plan work that challenges you more, especially those of you who are capable of harder work.
- You told us how much you like your school and helping your teachers. Perhaps you can ask them to give you more time to write longer pieces of work by yourselves
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We hope you all do well in your education.

Yours faithfully

Rajinder Harrison

Lead inspector