

Brookfield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119895
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	379902
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2012
Lead inspector	Eric Craven

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	37
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Deborah Smith
Headteacher	Jane Fallon
Date of previous school inspection	15 May 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Eric Craven

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. In addition to nine lessons and seven staff being observed a tour of the school was made accompanied by pupils. A little over four and a half hours was spent observing teaching and learning. Meetings were held with senior leaders, staff, a group of pupils, the community police officer, the Chair of the Governing Body and the school's adviser from the local authority. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plans and data on the pupils' academic progress and their behaviour. The seven questionnaires returned by parents and carers were analysed along with those from staff and pupils.

Information about the school

Brookfield School is a smaller than average-sized special school. All of the pupils have statements of special educational needs because of their emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. The school is designated to provide for both genders but only boys have attended for the past 15 years. The pupils are transported to and from school and come from all parts of North Lancashire. At 59%, the proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. All pupils are of White British heritage. A very small number are in the care of the local authority. Since the last inspection, there has been a change of headteacher and a restructuring of senior staffing. The school has Healthy School status, the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Sports for All award.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- Brookfield is a good school where pupils improve their behaviour and confidence. As a result the school is able to focus on teaching and learning which are both good. The school is not outstanding because more teaching needs to be of the highest quality if the legacy of underachievement many pupils have is to be eroded.
- The quality of the teaching varies but is good overall. The school knows more of the teaching needs to be of the highest quality. In the better lessons pupils see what they are doing is relevant and independent learning is promoted well. There is scope to provide different and more challenging work for some pupils and for subjects to make more contributions to improving pupils' literacy.
- Many pupils make good progress academically and some are catching up quickly in their reading. They also make good progress in dealing with their social and emotional difficulties. Their improved confidence puts them in a position to make more of their education; they learn to learn.
- Taking account of pupils' emotional, social and behavioural difficulties their behaviour is good overall. Staff provide a consistent response to misbehaviour that generally settles pupils quickly. Data show that the number of exclusions is on the decline, racially oriented incidents are very infrequent and incidents of bullying are reducing. Attendance is low but improving. It is not helped by a few pupils who are persistently absent.
- The newly formed senior leadership team is doing a good job improving teaching. Staff are proud to work at the school. Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school helped by the interrogation of data and monitoring of lessons. They use this effectively to manage the performance of staff. Some data could be further used if it was in a better form to show the progress pupils make over time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is of the highest quality by sharing best practice in the school and using models of excellent practice from elsewhere.
- Improve pupils' rates of progress and attainment by:
 - providing challenging work more closely matched to the needs of specific pupils
 - ensuring all subjects play a more significant role in developing pupils' literacy skills.
- Make further improvements to the rate of attendance by continuing to work with the school's partners to identify reasons why a few pupils and their families don't see the imperative to attend and use this information in evaluating the work of the school.
- Put the data on pupils' progress in a form that enables the school to more readily interrogate it to see how well groups of pupils and all pupils are progressing over time.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' progress in lessons and over time is good with some making splendid progress in aspects of their learning. For example, in Year 10 about half of the pupils are making more than the nationally expected progress in English and mathematics. The school's data shows that increasingly pupils are on track to achieve better results in GCSE and equivalent examinations. This is true also for pupils in different circumstances such as those who are in the care of the local authority and those who have particularly low starting points because of learning difficulties. Some pupils are making accelerated progress as a result of the school's increasing emphasis on reading. In Year 7 all the pupils are making advances in their reading with a few having added more than a year to their reading age in around five months.

Pupils' chequered educational histories have left them with a legacy of underachievement and in most cases their attainment is low. By the time they leave the school their attainment has improved considerably although still below nationally expected standards.

Pupils also make good progress in learning how to learn. The social skills of most pupils improve noticeably. Although this improvement takes longer for some there are excellent examples of pupils learning to get on well together and developing their confidence and self-esteem from very low starting points in many cases. Indeed, three pupils have returned to mainstream schools in the last two years. All of the parents returning the Ofsted questionnaire said their children were making progress. Endorsing this, almost 90% of the pupils who answered the questionnaire felt the school helps them do well. In discussion with the inspector one of the pupils represented the views of others in saying 'The staff are always telling you how well you are doing and boosting your confidence'.

Quality of teaching

The school's well-structured lesson planning template invariably helps teachers review pupils' previous learning at the beginning of lessons very well. Teachers use good questioning skills to check on pupils' understanding of their earlier work. Lesson plans include reference to groups of pupils and show how some are expected to produce more work than others or produce work of a better quality. However, lessons don't often include different work or activities for pupils that are specifically matched to their needs in order to provide an exacting challenge. Too often the emphasis on literacy in lessons is solely on developing pupils' vocabulary specific to that subject. Insufficient emphasis is given in subjects other than English to how that lesson can help improve pupils' reading skills, handwriting, spelling and punctuation.

Good quality teaching uses topics that capture pupils' attention by being as relevant as possible to their interests. This was the case in an information and communication technology lesson where pupils were learning how to create a simple racing car game using a software program. In lessons like this pupils are stimulated, pay full attention to the teacher before diligently applying themselves for a sustained period of time. In an outstanding food technology lesson the pupils' independent learning was first class. Staff took a back seat and provided just the right amount of support to gently prompt pupils and this admirably challenged them to do all the work themselves. In the weakest lessons the conditions for learning were not set well; there is too much teacher-talk and pupils spend far too little time on task.

There are good examples of how teaching contributes to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They gained a deep appreciation of the world around them in an English lesson where they were struck by the examples of racial intolerance, loneliness and poverty when discussing the book 'Of Mice and Men'. An assembly on eco-issues stimulated pupils' curiosity and galvanised their resolve to recycle. A question about the morality of heating a public swimming pool from a crematorium got pupils thinking deeply about controversial moral issues.

The Key Stage 4 curriculum has changed so that pupils have more choice and opportunities to gain meaningful accreditation. It has helped improve their engagement and attendance and the data point to further improvements in their achievements.

The questionnaire returns support a positive view of teaching. All parents and carers say teaching is good and a large proportion of the pupils agree, particularly noting how teaching helps them develop reading, writing and mathematics skills.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Many pupils' behaviour improves greatly over time at this school. All but one of the parents and carers questionnaire returns say behaviour is good and bullying is dealt with well. However, more returns, particularly those from parents and carers of the younger pupils, say lessons are disrupted because of behaviour problems. A few pupils do misbehave and pose challenges to staff and to one another. This is more often the case with the youngest pupils who find it difficult to behave consistently well because they are

new to the school. Nevertheless there is evidence of these pupils becoming more settled. The more able and mature students try to regulate the behaviour of their peers, sometimes to good effect.

The school's data show that the number of occasions pupils are sent out of class or remove themselves for brief periods of time-out is increasing. However this is in balance to the reducing number of times staff need to restrain pupils and shows how they are increasingly learning to manage their own behaviour by using the school's system to take a few minutes out when they get frustrated. Pupils say that the systems for managing behaviour have improved greatly over the last couple of years and that behaviour has improved as a result. The community police officer supports the view of much improved behaviour.

Although most staff report bullying is dealt with well fewer feel that behaviour is managed well. The systems observed during the inspection show staff employ successful strategies to minimise challenging behaviour and keep pupils safe. The care and welfare staff team members provide a consistent response to help pupils settle quickly and get back to learning. Most pupils show respect and say that this is because staff don't confront them unnecessarily and are willing to listen to their point of view. Pupils fully understand the points system and value the tangible rewards they can gain by behaving well. As a result of these effective systems the number of fixed-term exclusions is on the decline, racially oriented incidents are very infrequent and incidents of bullying are reducing.

The rate of attendance has shown improvement each year for the past three years. Nevertheless, the overall attendance rate remains low. However, this is mainly because of the intractable attendance of half a dozen pupils. The school makes strenuous and varied efforts to encourage and implore them to attend and has used prosecution on occasion but with little reward. The school's attendance rate rises dramatically to approaching broadly average when calculated without the attendance of these few pupils. The pupil and parent liaison officer has been tenacious and successful in his efforts to work with families and pupils. Over 60% of pupils improve their attendance once they start at the school, some quite markedly.

Leadership and management

All staff returning the questionnaire say they are proud to work at this school which shows how they are working well together and are making a positive difference. Senior staff have a good appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching. The feedback staff receive following lesson observations is helpful and contributes to their improvement. Records of staff's continuing professional development shows a wide array of training suitably focused on the quality of teaching and the welfare of the pupils. This too has contributed to improvements in teaching. Underperformance in teaching has been tackled robustly by the headteacher.

The curriculum is good and has been made more relevant and personal to the pupils following a recent review of how much choice pupils have and accreditation they can gain. It has a worthy focus on helping pupils learn right from wrong and how to live harmoniously together. They gain a good knowledge of other cultures and religions through the school's tireless efforts to provide meaningful experiences through charitable work, residential experiences, visits into the community and visitors to the school, including a recent exciting visit from a group of Zulu Warriors.

The members of the restructured the senior leadership complement one another's work well. Self-evaluation is common practice as the school strives to improve further. The relatively new Key Stage 4 curriculum is a good example of the school reviewing its effectiveness. The data on the behaviour of pupils are evaluated well to show the impact of the school's actions. The school tracks the progress pupils make and this identifies any underachievement. Some very good progress in reading is a good example of the success of interventions for these pupils. These data inform the targets given to pupils which most know along with the levels at which they are working. The school is aware that data are less well marshalled at a whole-school level to show the progress groups and all pupils make over time.

Members of the governing body have a lot of relevant experience and ask helpfully probing questions whilst providing a good deal of support and commitment. They are integrally involved in setting the school's agenda for improvement. The school's safeguarding arrangements are robust and meet statutory requirements. Staff pay due regard to the safety of pupils and are dutifully watchful for any forms of unfairness or discrimination. Because the school has made good inroads in the areas for improvement from its last inspection and knows itself well, there is a good capacity for further improvement.

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brookfield School, Poulton-le-Fylde, FY6 7HE

It was a pleasure to meet you when I inspected your school recently. Thank you to those of you who spoke to me or gave your views through the questionnaire.

I have judged Brookfield to be a good school. Those of you who talked to me told me how behaviour is improving because the rules are clear. Most of you make good progress in learning to manage your behaviour. Because of this you can concentrate on learning and this shows in the way you are achieving more. For example, some of you are making rapid gains in your reading. Attendance is low mainly because of a few pupils who are absent a great deal. Do make every effort to attend as much as you possibly can so you can gain qualifications to help you in the future. The quality of teaching varies but looking at it overall it is good. In the best lessons you pay lots of attention and find the work you are doing meaningful. You often work independently. A few of the lessons fail to interest you in the same way sometimes because they are not organised well enough. The school is being well managed by the headteacher and other staff as shown by the improvements being made to your behaviour and your learning in lessons.

I have asked the headteacher and governors to improve a few things. More of the lessons need to be of the highest quality so you can learn even more quickly. Some of you need to be given work that gets you to think and work even harder and all the subjects could help you more with your reading and writing skills. Attendance needs to improve. Finally, the school needs to get the information it has on the progress you make into a form that helps it check how well you are doing over time.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Eric Craven
Lead Inspector

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