

Brackenwood Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105013
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	355680
Inspection dates	19–20 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Declan McCauley

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	213
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Blanche Barrow
Headteacher	Mr A Lacey
Date of previous school inspection	10 April 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 21 lessons and observed eight teachers in lessons. They held meetings with three representatives of the governing body, staff, parents and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work closely and looked at the school's documentation relating to safeguarding, its improvement plans, reports on its work, governing body minutes and records of pupils' progress. Inspectors considered questionnaires from 87 parents and carers, as well as those from pupils and staff.

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

- The progress made by all pupils in their learning, particularly those who are more able in English and mathematics.
- How well assessment is used by teachers to increase the progress made by pupils in their learning.
- The impact of leaders in bringing about sufficient improvement in attainment.
- How well the needs of pupils are met by the promotion of community cohesion in school.

Information about the school

The school is a slightly smaller than average-sized junior school. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is in line with the national average. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language are below national averages. The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is also below the national average as is the percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs.

The school has gained a number of awards including Healthy School status, Activemark, the Continuing Professional Development Mark and the Financial Management Standard.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Brackenwood Junior School is a good school. The school environment is very welcoming and pupils enjoy attending the school and learning in lessons which engage and interest them. The school has improved in many areas since the previous inspection under the inspirational leadership of the headteacher and other senior leaders. There is a shared desire among all staff to improve the outcomes for the pupils. The vast majority of parents are pleased with their children's experience of school. Pupils are provided with many good opportunities to learn in a very caring environment. The governing body has focused on improving school in a number of areas and has had much success in ensuring that all pupils are safe in school. Teaching is of a high standard resulting in the vast majority of pupils making good progress in many lessons. Teachers use assessment well to support pupils effectively in their learning. The huge strengths in school leadership coupled with the desire to obtain the best for all pupils and the rapid improvement which has taken place leave the school with a very effective capacity to bring about further improvement.

By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is broadly in line with the national average, although higher in mathematics than in English. The recent improvement in progress made by pupils in lessons has, however, not yet made significant impact on raising attainment by the end of Year 6. Subject leaders undertake rigorous monitoring of their subjects and this has contributed successfully to the recent improvements. Robust self-evaluation procedures provide the senior leaders with accurate knowledge of where improvements are needed. Monitoring of progress made is bringing about improvement. Well-informed members of the governing body hold the school to account. Collectively, the governing body, headteacher and other leaders are well focused on further improving pupils' attainment and progress. They have rightly introduced strategies to identify exactly what level pupils are at when they enter school to enable them to accurately measure the gains made in learning.

Pupils are very well behaved throughout school and their behaviour makes a very positive contribution to their learning. Processes are in place which enable all staff to care for pupils effectively ensuring that they are guided well and supported throughout their time at school. Pupils are encouraged by many members of the school community to adopt healthy lifestyles resulting in them being knowledgeable about issues relating to drug and alcohol abuse and how to make well-informed choices. A number of actions have been taken by the school to promote community cohesion but these have so far not had sufficient impact on increasing pupils' understanding of the diversity beyond their locality.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 by:

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- improving the effectiveness of the recently introduced thematic curriculum
 - ensuring that all pupils have opportunities to fully apply their basic skills including ICT
 - creating more opportunities for pupils to routinely extend and redraft their writing.
- Develop among pupils an increased awareness and understanding of cultural diversity beyond the immediate locality.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils are overwhelmingly positive about their school and enjoy being involved in many aspects of school life. They particularly enjoy exciting and engaging interactive lessons that help them to learn. School data show that pupils start school below the national average in reading and writing but slightly above in mathematics. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly in line with the national average overall, although stronger in mathematics than in English. This is because pupils attain higher levels in reading than in writing. School has accurately identified this and is currently acting to bring about improvements in writing. From the time they enter school until they leave, pupils make good progress. In the lessons observed, pupils made good progress and achieved the challenging targets expected of them. Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. In all classes teaching assistants have a good understanding of these pupils' needs enabling them to make good progress.

Pupils are caring and very supportive of others. They are exceptionally well behaved at all times. The school is very successful in encouraging pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. Pupils confidently spoke to inspectors about how to live healthy lifestyles and how many grams of salt they needed to have each day for their diet to be healthy. A broad range of activities are run during lunch breaks and after school. The take-up by pupils of these activities is extremely high. As a 'Bike it school' much is being done to encourage pupils to exercise by cycling to school. Pupils say that they feel extremely safe and well cared for at school. They are exceedingly confident that they can talk to adults if they have any concerns and that these will be resolved promptly. They enjoy taking on responsibilities and participate enthusiastically in events which help others. Pupils' spiritual, moral, and social development is good. They are considerate of others' feelings and emotions and reflect thoughtfully on the needs of those who are less fortunate than they are. At an assembly during the inspection a member of the local clergy spoke to pupils about supporting others through bringing in contributions of packets and cans of food for the Charles Thompson Mission in Birkenhead. Pupils' cultural awareness is, however, relatively underdeveloped. The school council is very active and contributes successfully to the life of the school. Pupils' attendance is above average and, as a result of their good grounding in basic literary and numeracy skills, pupils are well prepared for their future, although they need more opportunities to apply these skills.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching in most of the lessons observed during the inspection was good with some which was outstanding. In the majority of lessons, activities are planned well to meet the individual needs of all the pupils including the more able. In the best lessons teachers maintain a good pace of learning throughout and ensure that activities are matched well to pupils' abilities. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used by teachers in many lessons to very good effect inspiring pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Teaching is less effective when pupils spend too long sitting listening to teachers while they could be engaged in independent learning tasks. Most teachers assess how the pupils are learning and the progress they are making using a range of effective processes. In the vast majority of lessons teachers use questioning skills very effectively to provide challenge for pupils. This helps teachers understand the impact of their teaching on pupils' learning. Targets set for pupils are detailed and inform them about what they must do next in order to improve in their learning. Teachers use robust processes to create and revise pupil's targets on a regular basis. Marking is used very effectively to identify the next steps which pupils must take to improve their work. Some teachers expect pupils to respond to their comments and even begin to redraft writing so that it is of a higher standard, but this is not seen in every class. Many pupils are regularly involved in effectively assessing the work of their peers.

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Recently, the school has been successful in developing a curriculum which is more relevant to pupils. All pupils are sufficiently challenged in lessons because the curriculum development which has taken place recently inspires and motivates them to learn. The school is in the process of developing the use of ICT as a tool to promote even more effective learning. Pupils are not currently developing their ICT skills sufficiently or applying them fully across the curriculum. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to reflect on aspects of their learning, Personal, social and health education is embedded in the wider curriculum. A good range of visits, visitors and after-school clubs enhance the curriculum well. Members of staff at the school know the pupils very well and take good care of them. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are particularly well supported through very effective tracking and monitoring processes. Transition arrangements between the infant and junior school are strong and effective, they work smoothly because of careful liaison between staff. Links with local high schools are used by staff to support the curriculum adequately.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The leaders of the school, including the governing body, are well motivated to improve the quality of education being provided and further raise attainment. They have a clear and accurate picture of the school's strengths and the areas where improvement is needed. The school's improvement plan sets out priorities which are clearly identified and relevant to school improvement. These have been discussed in detail by all those involved in bringing about the improvements. The senior leadership team has established an excellent track record in bringing about improvement in many areas. A good example of improvement is pupil's behaviour which is now recognised as being of the highest quality. Progress made by pupils learning has increased and attainment has risen because of the determination of the school leaders in driving improvement securely. The monitoring of teaching and learning is carried out rigorously by subject leaders and senior leaders. Effective strategies to evaluate the quality of work in classrooms are securely in place and used well to identify areas for improvement. The work of subject leaders on improving the quality of learning has helped to increase pupils' progress. The governing body has a thorough understanding of the workings of the school. Rigorous procedures are in place which enable it to hold the school fully to account for its work. The governing body is both supportive and challenging in its relentless drive for improving the school; it discharges its responsibilities effectively. Governors have worked very closely with the school to ensure the procedures of the highest quality are fully in place which result in keeping all pupils safe. This is an area of which they are particularly and rightly proud.

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The school works well with a range of partners to successfully support the learning and well-being of pupils. Relationships with parents and carers are good, and this was very apparent when inspectors spoke with a number of them on the playground. The school seeks the views of parents and carers and acts upon them. Its website demonstrates the commitment to working closely with parents and carers by sharing information to benefit the pupils' development. The virtual learning environment which is in the process of being developed is intended to strengthen this further. The school recognises its responsibilities for promoting full equality of opportunity and ensures that all pupils have equal chances to succeed in their education. School leaders have a sound understanding of the school community but currently not enough is being done to develop pupils' understanding of the wider national and international communities. The school is seen as an important part of the local community. It is resourced well overall and this has a positive impact on the outcomes for pupils.

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	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Over a third of parents and carers returned the inspection questionnaire. A very large majority of these parents and carers were positive about the school and its work. A large number also wrote comments to expand upon their views. Many spoke in glowing terms about the school and praised the staff for their work helping their child to develop. One of the comments made by parents was, 'The feeling of warmth when going into school is great. With my daughters' progress last year I am so pleased that she came here and I would recommend this school to anyone.'

This comment typified the responses. A number of parents and carers raised questions over how well the school prepares pupils for transition to the next stage of their education. Inspectors found transition arrangements support pupils well in developing the

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necessary skills as they prepare to move to their next school. All parents recognise that the school deals effectively with any unacceptable behaviour.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Brackenwood Junior 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 inspection team received 87 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 213 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	55	63	31	36	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	62	71	25	29	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	33	38	47	54	5	6	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	34	50	57	5	6	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	33	38	51	59	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	43	44	51	3	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	40	47	54	1	1	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)	32	37	48	55	6	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	38	51	59	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	39	52	60	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	33	47	54	4	5	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	50	57	34	39	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	53	39	45	0	0	1	1

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



21 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brackenwood Junior School, Wirral CH63 2HH

Thank you being so welcoming towards the inspectors when we visited your school. We really enjoyed meeting you and talking with you to find out about your school. Thank you to everyone who completed the pupils' questionnaires; they provided us with a great deal of information about your views. It is clear that you go to a very friendly and welcoming school. It provides you with a good education and it has some outstanding features, which you enjoy.

These are the main things that we found out about your school.

- You behave exceptionally well at all times.
- You enjoy school and always want to do your best.
- You care well for others, both at school and in the wider community.
- You know the adults care for you and this makes you feel safe and gives you confidence to talk to them if you have any worries.
- You like lessons that are interesting and help you to learn.
- You know how to eat healthily and understand why this is important.

We have asked the school's leaders to do two things to help make it even better.

- Enable you to attain even higher standards in your work at the end of Year 6.
- Help you to learn more about those from different cultures in the United Kingdom and beyond.

I saw many of you trying hard in lessons and I hope that you will continue to do this in the future so that you can make as much progress as possible in your learning.

Yours sincerely

Declan McCauley

Lead inspector

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