

Brent Knoll School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100760
Local Authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	376446
Inspection dates	13–14 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Stuart Charlton

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	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	145
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tom Livingstone
Headteacher	Jonathan Sharpe
Date of previous school inspection	23–24 June 2009
School address	Mayow Road London SE23 2XH
Telephone number	020 86991047
Fax number	020 82917216
Email address	admin@brentknoll.lewisham.sch.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 21 lessons taught by 21 teachers. Meetings were held with the vice-chair and chair of the governing body, staff and pupils. The work of the school was observed and the inspectors scrutinised the school improvement plan. The minutes of the leadership team and the governing body were scrutinised. Inspectors also looked at a range of other documentation, including that for safeguarding pupils, and 20 questionnaires from parents and carers. In addition, the views expressed in a range of staff and students questionnaires were considered.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work and looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The effectiveness of the management structures and strategies, at all levels, in ensuring quality provision for all pupils during a period of significant change.
- The systems to judge attainment on entry, set challenging targets and track pupils' progress to determine that all make the progress of which they are capable.
- The systems to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning and an analysis of curriculum planning to ensure that the very wide range of ages and pupils' needs are fully met.
- The outcomes for pupils in relation to their personal development, especially their behaviour and how these are monitored.

Information about the school

Brent Knoll provides education for pupils who have a statement of special educational needs related to autism, or are being assessed for one. In addition, nearly all pupils have additional difficulties across a wide range of learning, emotional, medical or behavioural needs. The range and complexity of pupils' needs has increased over recent years. Children, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, are taught in the Reception/Year 1 Class, but, at present, there are no children of this age in the school. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds, although close to 50% come from a range of other minority ethnic groups, the largest of these being of Black British African or Caribbean heritage. A very small proportion of pupils are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much higher than average. A significant minority arrive at the school part way through their education.

Throughout the 2010/2011 academic year the school was led by the two deputy headteachers sharing the role of acting headteacher. A new substantive headteacher took up post in September 2011 and is presently reviewing the new senior management roles and responsibilities. The school has achieved the Quality in School Study Support charter mark and the Healthy Schools 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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Brent Knoll provides a good education for its pupils. It has undergone considerable change in the last academic year, the nature and complexity of pupils' needs has increased significantly and the school has been without a substantive headteacher. Throughout this change, it has maintained the very highest quality of care, guidance and support, so that pupils make outstanding progress in developing their confidence and self-esteem.

Nearly all pupils make at least good progress in developing subject skills and for some of the present pupils progress is excellent. The school has extremely effective systems for behaviour management, which are operated consistently by all staff and very carefully monitored. As a result, behaviour around the school and in classrooms is outstanding. For all pupils, behaviour is greatly improved from when they first started at Brent Knoll. Pupils contribute outstandingly well to the school and the wider community, and indicate that they feel extremely safe and secure because procedures to safeguard pupils are exemplary.

There are very good systems in place which are highly effective in promoting attendance and encouraging punctuality so that overall attendance is above average. This represents excellent improvement compared with pupils' very low attendance at their previous schools and supports the school's good capacity to improve further. The school's links with parents and carers are outstanding based on very regular meetings with them and home visits when necessary.

The school has invested considerable time and effort in developing its provision since the previous inspection. The newly reorganised curriculum fully matches pupils' needs, but it is too new to have made a full impact on improving their achievements to become outstanding. However, provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is already outstanding based on the available evidence. The excellent range of activities out-of-school is very highly valued by pupils and participation rates are high. The opportunities for physical activities are particularly effective in helping pupils to adopt a healthy lifestyle and several explained how they have become much more health conscious.

Teaching and learning are good and in all areas of the school's provision and a few examples of exemplary practice were seen. Teachers and support staff establish excellent relationships with the pupils and these are the basis of the outstanding guidance and support for pupils' personal development. The staff know each pupil

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well and use this knowledge very effectively to address pupils' personal needs, particularly those related to behaviour. However, in a few lessons, teachers do not use the information about pupils' needs in the subject to best effect to adapt their teaching so that each individual makes consistently excellent progress.

The school's leadership has ensured that the school's vision is pursued with vigour and determination, so that the quality provision seen at the previous inspection has been maintained with further improvements. The school now has a stable staffing base. Leaders communicate their vision for the school well. This is supported by accurate self-evaluation and good improvement planning. Teamwork, across the teaching, support and administrative staff, is well established and underpins the school's continuing development.

Since the previous inspection, the governing body has been effective in supporting the school's leadership and in working to appoint a new substantive headteacher. It has refined its skills and has made significant changes to its systems and procedures, so that governance is good overall. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to fully challenge senior leaders. The school's work in partnership with other professionals to meet pupils' needs and promote their well-being is very impressive, and a highly significant factor in helping pupils to overcome barriers to learning. Actions to improve teaching, other provision and the outcomes for pupils have been concerted and effective, especially in terms of their good achievements and their much improved behaviour and attitudes to learning. As such, the capacity for further sustained improvement is good and is underpinned to effective self evaluation.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that in all lessons, teachers use information about individual pupils to best effect to adapt their teaching, so that each individual makes consistently outstanding progress in their academic learning.
- Use the skills of the governing body to challenge senior leaders as effectively as possible.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

All pupils, regardless of their background and ability, enjoy learning and achieve well. Those who are capable, gain qualifications covering a good range of academic and vocational subjects. The strong focus on the development of pupils' skills in communication and numeracy, particularly in the primary classes, pays off and has a significant and positive impact on their achievements across other subjects. It also ensures that pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve as well as their peers. The school has worked on the ways in which staff use assessment, covering each small step in learning, to ensure that pupils know what is expected of them. This detailed approach underpinned some excellent learning seen in mathematics in Key Stage 2 ensuring that those of differing abilities achieved of their

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very best. However, leaders recognise that there is still more to do to ensure that learning and progress are more consistently of this very high standard.

All pupils make significant gains in developing their self-esteem because staff value them as individuals and have high expectations of each one. Pupils of all ages work and play together in a harmonious atmosphere and when learning give each other effective feedback about how to improve. Pupils say that learning is fun. They understand about a wide range of cultures and lifestyles, for instance through many visits out of school, the summer schools and the annual residential visit. They make a highly important contribution to the school community and know their ideas are respected. They talk very positively about the way the school has responds to their ideas. Pupils keenly support the wider community through their work with others, notably in helping the elderly, in tending the school allotment and through older pupils helping at the local primary school. They show a good awareness of the need for a healthy lifestyle, as reflected in the Healthy Schools award.

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	*
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	1
Pupils’ behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

*In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to

How effective is the provision?

The very supportive relationships established by staff with their pupils are further strengthened through individual mentoring and tutorial sessions. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and in their planning they identify the needs of each

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individual well. They use resources, particularly interactive whiteboard technology, very well to interest and engage pupils. In the vast majority of lessons, teachers employ a wide range of teaching strategies to challenge and engage pupils. This was seen to advantage in an excellent English lesson with Year 3 pupils. However, the good identification of pupils’ needs is not always used to determine the most effective strategies to be employed for each individual.

Since the previous inspection, the school has overhauled its curriculum to give a good balance between academic, vocational and work-related opportunities. The development of highly effective partnerships with colleges and training providers has been particularly effective in this context. These changes are recent and have not yet had full impact on pupils’ achievements. The focus on developing pupils’ self-esteem and confidence is the cornerstone of the school’s work, with a particular focus on communication strategies and building positive relationships, which promotes the excellent development of pupils’ personal skills.

Staff make sure that all pupils, including those who join the school at different times during the year, settle quickly and happily into life in the various aspects of the school’s provision. Transition arrangements for those moving into the school and for those who move to further education or work contribute extremely well to reducing pupils’ anxieties. The highly consistent and successful approach taken by all staff to behaviour management ensures pupils make rapid improvements in their attitudes to school. Staff spend a great deal of time listening to pupils, giving them advice and promoting their well-being to overcome difficulties in their personal circumstances. Pupils are given excellent guidance about careers and opportunities available when they leave the school.

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?

Management structures, at all levels, have been used extremely effectively by the deputy headteachers in their role as acting joint headteachers to drive improvement. They have ensured that effective systems have been implemented to determine attainment on entry, set challenging targets and monitor pupils’ progress at individual and whole school level. These provide high-quality information which gives a clear overview of the school’s performance and are now being extended so that its performance can be compared more effectively with other schools in a national context. Staff are clear about what they need to do to improve and approach key

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developments enthusiastically, for example the introduction of new vocational and work-related programmes in Key Stage 4.

The governing body has provided clear direction and support for the work of the school through the recent changes when there was no substantive headteacher. It has appointed new personnel so that it has a wider range of skills, particularly those with an educational focus. In addition to this, it has streamlined its operational systems and structures so that it is now more effective in challenging the school’s leadership, but there is still further to go in this area. Parental involvement in the governing body has increased especially well since the last inspection.

An extremely strong feature of the provision is the partnerships which have been established with other professionals, particularly those in social services, the health and mental health fields and the police, which are especially effective in reducing pupils’ feelings of isolation and enhancing their self-esteem. The school’s excellent partnership with parents and carers ensures that they are fully involved in their children’s education. All staff go out of their way to ensure that parents and carers have full and regular information about all aspects of each pupil’s performance. They make phone calls to parents and carers, not just about things which may not have proceeded according to plan, but celebrating activities which have gone well.

Through its work, the school successfully challenges discrimination and ensures that all pupils, including those who are most vulnerable because of their personal circumstances, have the opportunities they need to succeed in their lives after school.

Safeguarding and child protection are high priority on everyone’s agenda and are extremely rigorous. Risk assessments are thorough, reflecting the highly effective systems to manage behaviour. The school uses its expertise in this area to train managers and teachers in other local schools. The school’s promotion of community cohesion is good. The highly effective links at local and regional level support the work of the school especially well and are enhanced by work in a national context.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	1
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

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The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

At the time of the previous inspection, the school provided education for six children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Currently, there were none of this age in school at the time of the present inspection. However, there are secure and highly detailed arrangements in place to provide a rich and exciting experience for young children. Data from the past shows exceptionally impressive outcomes, reflecting very high quality provision. The school shares their expertise with the local authority in a number of other schools. There are very well established and rigorous systems in place which ensure that children are safe and secure and the provision is based upon a comprehensive assessment of each child’s needs. These take full account of the views of parents and carers and there is extremely close liaison with them before and after their children start school. The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is extremely effective and ensures that all staff are well supported to meet the children’s needs.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

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Views of parents and carers

About one seventh of parents and carers returned the questionnaire, which is somewhat below average for a school of this type. Consequently, the views expressed have been supplemented with information derived from the school's own surveys. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive in their views about the school. As one said, 'I am very grateful and pleased with the way my child and I have been made to feel comfortable and welcome at Brent Knoll by both the staff and children'. Another said, 'The staff at this school are doing an amazing job.' The inspection shows that such comments are well founded. The inspection team found no evidence to support the concerns expressed by a very small number of parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Brent Knoll 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 20 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	14	70	6	6	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	15	75	5	5	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	12	60	6	6	1	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	12	60	5	5	1	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	12	60	7	7	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	11	55	7	7	1	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	11	55	5	5	2	10	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)	10	50	8	8	1	5	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	13	65	6	6	1	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	50	8	8	1	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	60	7	7	1	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	11	55	8	8	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	13	65	6	6	0	0	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.

The letter has been kept purposefully short and simple so that the school can translate into a pictorial format.



15 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brent Knoll School, Lewisham, SE23 2XH

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we inspected Brent Knoll. We judged that the school gives you a good education and that the way in which staff support you is exemplary. We particularly enjoyed being able to talk so many of you. Through the help you get in managing your own behaviour, you regain your confidence and self-esteem. This helps the older ones move successfully to further education, work or training. The small group sizes are a great help and, as one of you said, 'Lessons are fun, it doesn't feel like a school'. You all make a highly effective contribution to the local community through working on the allotment and helping at the local primary school, so please keep this up.

I have asked teachers to ensure that in every lesson they use a wide range of teaching methods to help you to make even better progress. The governing body now has a great many skills which I want them to use these more effectively to make Brent Knoll even better. I know you will play your part in this by doing your best at all times, particularly in managing your behaviour.

Yours sincerely,

Stuart Charlton
Lead inspector

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