

Brookmans Park Primary School

Bradmore Way, Brookmans Park, Hatfield, AL9 7QY

Inspection dates 29–30 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Senior leaders and governors are not setting sufficiently demanding targets to make sure that teaching is consistently good, so that pupils make rapid progress and reach the standards they could.
- Teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes does not build quickly enough on what children know and are able to do.
- Not all marking gives pupils a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their work.
- There is too much teaching where the pace of learning is too slow to make sure pupils make good progress. Sometimes learning is not active enough to motivate pupils to try harder than usual.
- The work set for pupils in some classes is too easy and often repeats what they can already do. This restricts the progress they make.

The school has the following strengths

- Behaviour in and around the school is good and much of it is exemplary.
- Attendance is consistently high and pupils love coming to school.
- The headteacher maintains excellent procedures, including liaison with external agencies where appropriate, for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of pupils.
- Pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy.
- Good teaching in some year groups is providing pupils with a level of challenge so that they make faster progress.
- Pupils have developed a real enjoyment of reading.
- Relationships throughout the school are very good, including those with parents.
- Pupils have good, and sometimes very good, attitudes to their learning.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are extremely well supported so that they often make good progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons and 12 teachers.
- Inspectors met with the Chair of the Governing Body, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, subject leaders, the special educational needs leader and a representative from the local authority.
- The views of 39 parents submitted to the Parent View website were analysed. A range of other parents' views were sought by inspectors as parents brought their children to school. Outcomes from the school's most recent parent questionnaire were also looked at.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents, including the school improvement plan and the school's self-evaluation. They also examined work in pupils' books and on displays.
- Inspectors listened to pupils from Year 1 and Year 6 read, as well as to pupils reading as part of their lessons.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils, including representatives from the school council.

Inspection team

Nichola Perry, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
David Turner	Additional Inspector
Sherry Gladwin	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than average.
- Most pupils are White British. There are fewer pupils from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language than found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for whom the school receives additional income (the pupil premium) is below the national average.
- The percentage of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported by school action is lower than that found nationally, as is the proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the teaching so that it is consistently of good and outstanding by:
 - ensuring that all class teachers have a better understanding of how well the pupils are performing in writing and mathematics so that work set for pupils does not repeat what they can already do
 - making it clear to all pupils exactly what it is they need to do in writing and mathematics so that they are able to quickly reach the next stage in their learning.
- Ensure that leaders at all levels are equipped with the necessary skills so that they can carry out their monitoring roles with greater rigour by:
 - using data more precisely to set whole-school targets which increase pupils' rate of progress year on year, leading to pupils making better than expected progress by the end of Year 6
 - providing more opportunities for all leaders to regularly monitor the quality of teaching with the expectation that this leads to a higher proportion of teaching which is consistently good or better
 - checking more closely both the quality and consistency of teachers' marking in all classes so as to provide pupils with more accurate information about their performance and help them to improve more rapidly.
- Ensure that all children make more rapid progress from their starting points across the Nursery and Reception classes by:
 - agreeing a clear system of measuring how well children are performing which provides an overview of progress from when they start in the Nursery to the end of the Reception Year
 - improving the planning for what all children are learning so that activities provide greater challenge and build more effectively on what the children can already do.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Although attainment by the end of Year 6 is above average in English and mathematics, standards should be higher than this because most children start school with skills and knowledge that are better developed than those expected for children of this age.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage do not make as much progress as they could. Although they make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development, progress in many other areas of learning is no better than ordinarily expected.
- Attainment in recent years has been above average at the end of Year 2, but this is not as high as it should have been. There has not been a sharp enough focus on what pupils already know and are able to do. As a result, teachers have been planning work which is too easy for some pupils.
- The progress that pupils make has been erratic, particularly in Years 3 to 5, leaving much to be done in Year 6. Recent improvements in teaching and more rigorous checking on pupils' progress are leading to greater consistency and improved rates of progress in all year groups.
- New programmes for the teaching of reading, writing and spelling have been introduced, to ensure pupils make faster progress. These are bringing improvements in progress but are yet to result in the high standards of attainment many pupils could achieve. Changes in the way mathematics is taught have also had a positive effect on pupils' progress resulting in improved attainment in the 2012 national tests at the end of Year 6.
- The rigorous programme of teaching phonics has brought improvements in reading throughout the school. Pupils make good use of their knowledge of letters and sounds (phonics) to help them to interpret unfamiliar words and understand text.
- Older pupils are developing into confident, accurate and fluent readers. They read very regularly in school and at home to family members and have developed a love of reading.
- The extra funding (pupil premium) to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is used very well by the school to provide wide-ranging activities, both in school and in the wider community. Well-focused additional sessions and, in particular, high levels of excellent adult support ensure that these pupils, as well as disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- There is a wide variation in the quality of teaching throughout the school. In too many lessons, teachers are not making the work difficult enough. As a result, pupils spend too much time going over what they already know rather than learning new skills and knowledge. Higher expectations of teachers' performance have resulted in improvements in teaching, but good teaching is not yet common and there are too few examples of outstanding teaching.
- Teachers are not making full use of the information they collect about what pupils can already do to plan lessons. In pupils' mathematics books, for example, there is too much work that pupils complete with ease and without having to think too hard. In the best lessons teachers are using information well to plan activities which motivate and stretch pupils of all abilities.

- While the needs of some groups are not consistently well met, activities for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are very well adapted. Resources, such as Braille machines and standing frames are used particularly well to help pupils' access learning and the high level of excellent adult support ensures that they make good progress.
- In some lessons teachers spend too much time talking and there tends to be too many interruptions to learning, such as stopping the lesson to share other pupils' work. This detracts from pupils being actively involved in their own learning.
- In most lessons, teaching places strong emphasis on developing all aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. In particular, pupils' social and communication skills are being well developed across the school. For example, pupils are often encouraged to rehearse their ideas in pairs, or in small groups.
- Marking is very variable and requires improvement. It generally offers encouragement and, in some cases, includes guidance on how pupils can improve their work. However, there is no dialogue with pupils or references to pupils' learning targets for improvement. Discussions with pupils show that they are not sufficiently clear about what they have to do to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school places a strong emphasis on pupils' personal development. Pupils operate as a community, are proud of their school and are keen to do well. The pupils themselves and their parents are unanimous that behaviour is consistently good. Pupils have a crystal clear sense of right and wrong. However, they occasionally lose concentration when they are given work that is too easy.
- Attendance is consistently high, reflecting pupils' love of their school. Pupils are extremely polite to each other and to adults. This reflects the high expectations of staff. Pupils understand how much they and their contributions are valued, and so they are relaxed and speak confidently to adults.
- Pupils demonstrate a strong tolerance of difference. Pupils who are different in any way are welcomed and accepted without question. The school plays a strong part in the local community and regularly celebrates local history. Extensive international contacts are ensuring that pupils have a good understanding of the different cultures and ways of life beyond modern Britain.
- Pupils are unanimous that bullying is not an issue in the school. School records show that bullying of any sort is rare. Pupils speak with confidence and understanding about bullying, including name calling that arises from prejudice, and what to do should it occur. Exclusions are also rare.
- All aspects of safeguarding meet requirements. Pupils show an excellent understanding of how to live healthy lives and keep themselves, and others, safe. They have a clear understanding of e-safety. Parents, including those spoken to during the inspection, feel very confident that their children are safe and well cared for in school.
- The school provides strong support for pupils and their families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Pupils given a fresh start in this school thrive, even where they have not had a positive experience elsewhere.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Aspects of self-evaluation and improvement planning are not sufficiently robust. While self-evaluation is generally realistic and accurate, the school development plan is short on detail so that it is not clear how and when actions to bring about improvement will be achieved. As a result, the school's capacity to improve further requires improvement.
- The headteacher has revised procedures to manage staff performance so that they are more rigorous and hold staff to account for improving their teaching. There has been a range of relevant training provided and this has led to improved teaching across the school so that there is now an increasing proportion of good teaching.
- Regular meetings with teachers now track pupils' progress and set clear targets for further improvement. However, these targets lack sufficient rigour and require improvement so that in the future they are set to ensure better than expected progress for all pupils.
- The recently appointed leaders of English and mathematics have good subject knowledge and are increasingly helping staff to bring about improvement but they have not yet established a comprehensive overview of the quality of teaching and its impact on progress. Similarly, the leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage requires improvement because the Nursery and Reception classes do not plan work that results in consistently good learning for the children.
- Conversely, the leadership of special educational needs is effective. Pupils' progress is tracked very closely so that they achieve well. Good training is provided for support staff who are highly effective. The reading manager monitors the impact of the new reading scheme on pupils' progress.
- Subjects are taught through themes and topics which reflect the interests of pupils and make learning relevant to the pupils' own experiences. There are some good links made between subjects so that pupils can see the relevance of what they are learning. However, the work that teachers set for pupils is sometimes not at the right level.
- Until recently, the local authority has had limited involvement in the school. Since noting the decline in attainment and the headteacher requesting a review in February 2012, there has been increased involvement. The local authority has stated that they will be working more closely with the school.
- Partnerships with parents are strong. School questionnaires and those parents responding on Parent View show a high degree of satisfaction with the school and what it provides for their children. Those spoken to during the inspection also feel very satisfied. They feel well informed and consider that the headteacher and staff are always available and very approachable.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors bring a wide range of expertise to their role. For example, prudent management and monitoring of finances keeps them aware of how effectively money is being used for school improvement. They also make sure the school is using the pupil premium funding properly and check its impact on the progress of the pupils. Governors have a good range of training opportunities. They demonstrate an adequate knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The recent local authority review of the school's performance has focused their attention on the erratic progress made across Years 3 to 6 so that they are now fully aware of the need for improvement and increased challenge on the school's performance. All governors have a link to a specific subject which provides a focus for their regular programme

of visits to the school. Governors set the headteacher's performance targets and have been fully involved in revision of the school's performance management procedures. They closely check the impact of the system for setting targets for teachers and approve any associated increases in salaries.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	117570
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	403331

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	340
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Haines
Headteacher	Nathan Hairon
Date of previous school inspection	10 July 2008
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