

# Brays School

Brays Road, Sheldon, Birmingham, B26 1NS

**Inspection dates** 13–14 February 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- Pupils make outstanding progress in English and mathematics. This is because teaching is outstanding and every moment is used to promote learning.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make rapid gains in communicating by using signs, pictures, switches or words.
- Pupils make huge strides towards becoming independent in moving around freely and feeding themselves.
- Teaching is inspirational. Teachers know exactly what each pupil should learn next. They plan effectively and creatively to make sure that this learning takes place.
- The provision of exceptional care to meet pupils' complex medical needs lies at the heart of the school.
- Teachers and health workers ensure pupils are seated comfortably so they are free from pain and able to learn. Very imaginative adaptations are made to wheelchairs and furniture to achieve this.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils are very good at keeping themselves safe to the best of their ability.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are highly creative. They provide an outstanding range of teaching methods, resources and demanding activities to meet pupils' widely varying needs.
- Support for communication and physical development is a part of every lesson in all subjects, so pupils make excellent progress.
- All leaders, including the governing body, are committed to equipping every pupil with the skills needed to move on to secondary education.
- Rigorous checking of teaching and a thorough understanding of how each pupil learns best means that pupils' achievement constantly improves.
- Expertise from this school makes a valuable contribution to supporting pupils with physical disabilities in mainstream schools throughout the City of Birmingham.
- Very occasionally, pupils are taken out of the class for routine personal hygiene at the very moment they are learning something new. This interferes with their rate of learning.
- On rare occasions, staff do not act quickly enough to remove distractions for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder so that they continue to concentrate well. Staff do not always use pupils' own interests well enough to inspire their learning further.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 14 lessons taught by 12 different teachers. Thirteen of these lessons were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also heard pupils in different classes read, and looked at pupils' work when in class.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation including: assessment and attendance information, statements of special educational needs, care and feeding plans, the school's plans for improvement and monitoring information, curriculum plans, minutes of governing body meetings and various policies including safeguarding documents. The school did not make use of the Ofsted staff questionnaire because it had carried out its own survey of staff views just a few weeks before the inspection.
- There were 10 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) at the time of the inspection. These views were taken into account by inspectors, along with the outcomes from recent parent and carer surveys carried out by the school.

## Inspection team

Jeffery Plumb, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christine Fraser

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school makes provision for pupils with physical difficulties, severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorder, specific communication and language disorders, visual impairment and hearing impairment. Most pupils have additional complex medical needs. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The number on roll has increased since the previous inspection, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The needs of these children are more complex than they were previously.
- This school does not use any other alternative schools or locations to provide regular education for its pupils.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those from families where English is an additional language, are above average. These pupils are represented across all the different disability and special educational needs groups in the school.
- An above average proportion of pupils are eligible for pupil premium funding, which is extra government funding for pupils looked after by the local authority and known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school has a service level agreement with Birmingham City Local Authority to support mainstream schools across the city in providing for pupils with physical difficulties.
- Brays has status as a National Teaching School, a National Support School and a National School of Creativity.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more is outstanding by:
  - ensuring that pupils with complex needs are not taken out of the classroom when they are engaged with and enjoying learning, unless it is absolutely necessary to do so
  - taking full advantage of pupils' spontaneous interests in aspects of lessons to inspire further learning
  - making sure that pupils with autistic spectrum disorder concentrate as well as possible by minimising distractions when they occur, and re-directing the pupils quickly back to their work.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with exceptionally complex needs. Often they are uncomfortable, unable to communicate and struggle to move freely. Most are helped to overcome these difficulties and so soon become ready to learn. Their progress in communication is outstanding.
- Throughout Key Stages 1 and 2, all pupils make outstanding progress in English and mathematics whatever their particular circumstances, disability or special educational needs. Progress is better than the rate of progress expected nationally in these subjects for pupils with such complex needs. It is faster in reading and mathematics than in writing, which is a consequence of many pupils' very severe physical difficulties.
- Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties show they anticipate what is going to happen, such as when a puppet from a story book is held close to their face. The most-able pupils with severe learning difficulties or autistic spectrum disorder show a good understanding of books as they point accurately to the correct picture or symbol when asked a question. A few pupils with various difficulties, including physical disabilities, read texts independently.
- Pupils with severe physical disabilities or profound and multiple learning difficulties find writing activities difficult. However, with fingers rubbed and hands stretched to improve their flexibility, together with access to a range of switches to operate symbol and word programs on computers, almost all make outstanding progress from their low starting points. The most-able pupils write simple stories and spell words with reasonable accuracy.
- Progress is exceptional in mathematics. Pupils' mathematical development builds step by step whatever their ability or needs. Their achievement by Year 6 is outstanding. The most-able use money, ask for change and tell the time. All experience handling coins, for example, when queuing in a pretend shop. A few pupils understand how to weigh small amounts and estimate the size of an object.
- Although pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and complex physical difficulties make outstanding progress overall, a few slip backwards because of the severity of their medical conditions. Everything is done to help these pupils maintain their skills and achieve as much as possible. Specialist equipment helps pupils with hearing and sight impairment to make the same outstanding progress as their friends.
- Throughout the school pupils make outstanding progress towards their non-academic targets, such as improving their independence in moving and feeding, and establishing better sleep patterns. Pupils set themselves targets for what they really want to achieve and try exceptionally hard to succeed. These are often very difficult for them, such as throwing a ball to hit a target, but pupils persevere until they succeed.
- Pupil premium funding is used very effectively to speed up the rate of progress in reading for children looked after by the local authority and for those known to be eligible for free school meals. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those from families who speak English as an additional language, are treated as individuals and receive support based on all their needs. They make the same outstanding progress as the other pupils.

**The quality of teaching is outstanding**

- All teaching is at least good and most is outstanding. In many lessons, teaching is inspirational. In these, expectations are high and questioning is exceptionally effective and designed to check the responses of pupils of all abilities. Resources are very well modified to make sure that pupils with a wide range of physical disabilities are fully included. Many different, interesting and demanding activities are provided in the same classroom. This ensures that all pupils enjoy what they are doing and try hard to succeed, and so move on rapidly with new learning.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is consistently outstanding. It very successfully equips children with the necessary communication skills required to learn.
- A particular strength of teaching is the way that each pupil is supported to develop an important life or physical skill alongside academic achievement. For example, this may be developing a very specific skill such as using 'block scissors' for cutting. For other pupils, staff encourage physical skills such as extending their reach by pointing at a page in a book.
- Teachers use their knowledge of what pupils already know and understand to set work for them at the correct level. Activities are planned exceptionally well in English lessons to make sure all pupils complete demanding tasks that help them make progress. For example, in a reading lesson, a few pupils with complex needs including visual impairment were positioned so that they could point at the pictures with their eyes and smell the scented pages. Others were given the time to sound out a word in the story such as 'chicken', while a few were given the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the text through the teacher's skilful questioning.
- Teaching of writing is exceptionally skilful and inventive. Activities range from a teacher helping pupils to experience writing by placing a hand over their hand to make marks in sand, through to supporting a pupil to write a full sentence using a computer.
- There is a real buzz in mathematics lessons and the atmosphere is energetic. Teaching assistants and teachers work together very effectively to support pupils' learning. They plan very flexibly to take account of day to day circumstances and provide wide-ranging, imaginative activities that meet pupils' individual needs. For example, in one lesson some pupils were supported to follow a light line with their eyes, others found and counted hidden toys, while some solved challenging number problems.
- Literacy and numeracy skills are taught exceptionally well across all topics. In a project on Ancient Egypt, for example, the most-able pupils explored the concepts of 'higher than' and 'lower than' when gazing at pyramids. A few were encouraged to spell words commonly used during the period such as 'spear'. Pupils with complex needs explored objects from the same period of history and experienced spicy aromatherapy oils and an Egyptian fan being close to their face. This helped them develop a sense of time and place.
- Very occasionally, pupils with complex needs are removed from the classroom for routine personal hygiene, just as they are on the cusp of learning. On such occasions the sparkle in their eyes and smile on their faces fade and they cannot maintain what they have just learned. Mostly, staff drop their original plan when a pupil shows a real interest in something else. They run with the pupil's excitement and use it to develop learning further. On rare occasions, this does not happen, and staff miss these unplanned opportunities to speed up that pupil's learning.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**

- Pupils love learning at Brays. This is because staff very skilfully position pupils comfortably using specially adapted chairs so that they are free from pain and able to reach the equipment they need to learn. Staff massage the hands of pupils who struggle to grip objects before expecting them to do so. As a result, all pupils can enjoy the interesting and challenging activities set for them, whatever their particular difficulties.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils greet visitors warmly, some signing 'good morning' and others saying 'hello', all accompanied by broad smiles.
- Occasionally, pupils with autistic spectrum disorder are not moved away from areas in the classroom which tend to distract them, such as windows. At these times they become 'fussy' and their learning slows.
- There are no fights, no racist or bullying incidents and no exclusions at Brays. Incidents of difficult behaviour are related to pupils' particular difficulties. For example, when some pupils first start at the school they can become distressed because they cannot communicate. The speech therapy team helps most of these pupils to overcome this difficulty. As they learn to communicate, their behaviour improves very significantly.
- Pupils who speak using words say that they feel safe at school. They say, 'We can talk about what makes us sad with a teacher'. Using gesture, pupils with the most complex needs express who they want to meet their personal care needs. Overwhelmingly, parents and carers say, 'Our children are safe'.
- Pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe is outstanding. They understand that if they propel their wheelchairs too quickly along the corridor they may knock a friend over. Outside during play, they know that they can smell the berries on a bush, but never eat them. The most-able pupils, within their capability, have a good grasp of how to keep themselves safe when using computers. They understand that it is inappropriate to try and hug a stranger. Those able to use their arms freely always put a helmet on by themselves before riding a 'trike' in the playground.
- Attendance for most pupils is high. It has risen year-on-year over the past three years because more medical needs are being met at the school. Absence is linked to lengthy stays in hospital or frequent off-site visits to specialist clinics.

**The leadership and management are outstanding**

- The headteacher's relentless drive to improve teaching has greatly increased the amount of outstanding teaching since the previous inspection. Pupils' progress and the quality of teaching are checked rigorously and frequently.
- Specific training is provided to develop individual teachers. They receive coaching from experts in the areas where they require improvement. They respond enthusiastically and their teaching improves. As a result, pupils' academic achievement and progress in relation to a wide range of other aspects are constantly getting better.
- The school has an accurate understanding of its outstanding practice, but also of what could be even better. This is because senior leaders analyse every aspect of the school's work thoroughly. Decisive actions are triggered by this analysis, which greatly benefit pupils. For example, two years ago the analysis of reading results flagged up some questions about whether pupils could

achieve even better in reading. A new approach to reading was launched, teachers were trained, and pupils' reading results have improved further as a result.

- Senior, middle and subject leaders lead improvements extremely well. Partnerships with health workers enable pupils to get very good quality speech and physiotherapy support, which greatly helps them with their communication and mobility skills. Pupils experience many creative opportunities to learn through a rich range of subjects, including excellent, inspirational opportunities for learning outdoors.
- Parents and carers are taught how to support their children through signing and help them gain greater confidence in moving independently. They are encouraged not to 'spoon feed' their children, but to challenge them to do everything possible with the minimum of adult help.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. For example, they gaze with amazement through a telescope at the stars. They experience the smells and hear the noises of a 'rainforest' as part of the creative topic work provided for them. Those able to do so are encouraged to deliver messages around the building, supported by personal picture communication books where necessary. Pupils' awareness of cultural diversity is heightened by activities such as Bhangra dancing at the end of Eid, in which all pupils, including those using wheelchairs and walkers, join in joyfully.
- Leaders ensure that all groups of pupils have an equal chance to succeed in every aspect of their learning and development. They go out of their way to support those going through a medical crisis and ensure total dignity for every pupil. The school does not tolerate any form of discrimination and as far as they are able to, pupils value each other's rich cultural heritages.
- The local authority provides very good support, particularly in training governors. There is a very effective partnership between the local authority and the school in working to benefit pupils with physical difficulties in schools across Birmingham.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance is outstanding. The governing body supports and challenges the headteacher extremely well. Governors are highly skilled and actively involved in finding out the strengths of the school and deciding what could be even better. They are involved in working on the improvements and have lead responsibilities covering every aspect of the school's work. The governing body is exceptionally well trained and equipped to ask 'tough' questions about pupils' achievement. For example, they rigorously check the progress made by children looked after by the local authority and those for whom the school receives the pupil premium to check that they achieve as well as other pupils. They ensure that any teacher who does not perform well enough does not move up the pay scale, and that the headteacher's performance is reviewed thoroughly, and that rigorous targets are set for her. Governors make sure that safeguarding meets requirements.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	103618
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	402921

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	88
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	June Mole
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jane Edgerton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 March 2008
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