

Brookfields School

Moorfield Road, Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 3JA

Inspection dates 6–7 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
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.

- The exuberant 'meet and greet' every day sets the tone for the school as pupils arrive to smiles, 'high fives' and a very happy, harmonious school community.
- Pupils of all ages make good and better progress and learn exceptionally well as a result of mostly outstanding teaching.
- Well focussed and highly structured teaching systems help pupils with autistic spectrum conditions to 'make sense of their world'. Communication skills for all pupils develop exceptionally well.
- Pupils feel extremely safe and valued in school and show great enthusiasm for their learning. Their behaviour is outstanding.
- A high quality curriculum and personalised learning programmes develop pupils' reading, writing and mathematics skills very effectively. The school plans to enhance this further through the development of its sensory provision.
- The consistency of approach to learning that the school strives to accomplish is extended superbly through excellent partnerships with parents; and this underpins pupils' outstanding achievement.
- The combined wealth of experience of the headteacher and the dynamism of the deputy headteacher, promoted since last inspection, have improved upon the school's previously outstanding effectiveness.
- Leadership and management, including governance are outstanding. Teaching and learning and pupil progress are rigorously checked; governors provide effective support and challenge.
- The school's service to support pupils with autistic spectrum conditions in local schools provides a valuable and highly respected resource, regarded by the local authority as exemplary.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 14 lessons and three shorter periods of teaching. They observed all of the school's teachers and classes. One lesson was jointly observed with the school's deputy headteacher.
- Pupils led inspectors on a tour of the school; inspectors also listened to them read and discussed their work with them.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, school staff and senior leaders, the school's nurse, members of the governing body, the school council and a group of older pupils.
- A meeting was held with a representative from the local authority, and a telephone call made to a second local authority representative with specific reference to the work of the school's outreach service.
- Informal discussions were also held with staff and pupils.
- Information from the school's most recent parental questionnaire was taken into account, together with the views of four parents who visited the school. Insufficient responses were available on the online questionnaire (Parent View) to be able to access them.
- Staff views were gathered from discussions and from the staff questionnaire.
- The inspectors looked at information about pupils' progress, teaching, planning and monitoring documentation. The school's documents on safeguarding were reviewed, together with records of attendance and pupils' behaviour.

Inspection team

Linda Clare, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Paul Edmondson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Brookfields provides for pupils with complex special needs. All pupils attending the school have a statement of special educational needs indicating severe learning difficulties and/or autistic spectrum conditions.
- Many pupils have additional physical or medical needs.
- The school has changed from an all-age (3 to 19) special school since its last inspection. It now caters for pupils between the ages of 3 and 11. Pupils can join the school at any age but most begin school in the Nursery.
- Almost half of the school's pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding provided to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authority and the children of military personnel); this is significantly above the national average.
- There are three times as many boys as girls in the school and most pupils are of White British heritage.
- A small number of pupils experience activities in local mainstream primary schools; for these, the school has links with St Augustine's RC Primary, St Basil's RC Primary, St John Fisher RC Primary, Hill View Primary and Holy Family School.
- Children from the Warrington Road Children's Centre join the school's nursery-age group for one session every week.
- The school has links with Cavendish School and Ashley School and works in partnership with the Merseyside Special Schools' consortia for a range of activities.
- The school has an outreach service which has grown in size since the last inspection. The service is maintained on behalf of the local authority and serves both primary and secondary schools. It provides advice, support and guidance for pupils with autistic spectrum conditions and visual impairment, and for their teachers and families.
- The school has achieved the Basics Skills Quality Award, National Autistic Society accreditation, International Schools Award, ICT Mark Award, Eco Schools Award, Artsmark (Silver) Award and holds Healthy Schools status. It has also achieved the Investors in People award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to develop an in-house sensory team to directly meet pupils' occupational therapy needs.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Pupils start school with skills much lower than typically expected of children their age because of their complex needs. They make at least good progress and for many, progress is outstanding.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage children make very good progress in making themselves understood. They learn to follow routines, start to predict next steps and gain an excellent understanding of turn taking. These skills provide a very good basis for future learning.
- Pupils learn very successfully. Skills in reading, writing and mathematics develop very well as a result of the school's consistent and structured approach to lessons. In guided reading, they learn songs and rhymes which reinforce their learning very effectively. They are keen to try, work hard and enjoy their activities.
- The communication skills of all pupils develop exceptionally well. Some pupils learn to communicate through eye pointing, facial expression or gesture. Others use pictures, symbols, objects of reference and signing increasingly independently.
- The more-able pupils blend letters, construct sentences and develop good language skills. By the end of Key Stage 2, some pupils are articulate and fluent in their speech, well demonstrated by the pupils who lead the tour of the school.
- Pupils make excellent use of technology, which significantly boosts their confidence and self-esteem. Basic switches help pupils to make choices. I-pads are used daily and pupils were observed independently using touch screens to help Bob the Builder get ready for work. The pupil premium is used effectively and pupils in receipt of funding achieve equally well as other pupils. It has contributed to raising pupil progress through new personal technology and to developing social skills in a curriculum focussed on individual needs.
- Much real-life learning is woven into lessons. Pupils make excellent progress in developing their social skills through their regular community visits. These help them to better understand the world in which they live. Literacy and numeracy skills develop very well and there is little difference between the progress of girls and boys, those from ethnic minority groups or those in receipt of free school meals or allocated pupil funding.
- Progress is made in very small stages. Pupils' progress is checked very thoroughly and regularly. Extra help is provided quickly if needed.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching is consistently good and most is outstanding. Staff organise structured play and workstation areas and use known routines very effectively. There is an unrelenting emphasis on encouraging pupils to initiate communication.
- Teachers expect pupils to make the highest possible gains and work is planned meticulously. They are careful to build on what pupils have learned and to ensure each next step will result in even greater progress. Learning is well linked to pupils' personal interests.
- Pupil understanding is checked constantly and pupils are encouraged to review their own learning. In Year 6, pupils used smiley face cards to decide whether their reading task had been 'Easy Peasy' or 'Okay I think'. They gave very honest views and well-focussed questioning from the teacher enabled them to give good reasons for their answers and to identify where/if they had needed help.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work closely and very efficiently in class teams. Each adult moves to the next phase of the lesson smoothly, with good understanding of what every pupil is to learn. Time is not wasted.
- Instructions are clear and staff use language appropriate to pupil needs. 'Social stories' very successfully help pupils to understand the perspective of others and music therapy has been

introduced to foster willingness to communicate.

- Reading is taught very effectively through a sequenced scheme which helps pupils to clearly understand each stage. Writing and mathematics are equally well taught. Picture timetables provide clear information for pupils about what they have to do next.
- Teachers use themed topics exceedingly well to develop pupils' flexibility of thinking, creativity and imagination – areas that pupils find the most difficult. When reinforcing the World Book Day theme 'We're going on a bear hunt', pupils squealed with delight as they sat under black gauze material imagining the dark bear cave and as (instant) snow fell on their desks.
- New experiences within the topics are introduced carefully. Staff are vigilant in watching for potential 'triggers' which may upset pupils. In one lesson, the teacher quickly recognised that sound effects in a model rocket were beginning to disturb a pupil so swiftly removed the noise section, which calmed him. The action prevented any escalation of distress and enabled the pupil to continue learning.
- Pupils receive excellent feedback from staff on their progress. Praise is used appropriately, individual targets are reviewed, and useful, relevant marking or ink stamps help pupils to know how well they have done.
- Staff are very sensitive to ensuring pupils' dignity and privacy, and attend discreetly to medical or personal needs. Speech and language programmes are absorbed into daily lessons. The school is endeavouring to develop its own sensory team so that occupational therapy recommendations may be equally well threaded into pupils' work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils are very proud of their school and of their achievements. They are polite, well mannered and say they like school a lot because they feel very safe and make friends there.
- Learning in lessons is much enhanced by pupils' excellent behaviour. Relationships in the school are outstanding and pupils' personal skills develop extremely well. They increasingly choose to work with others and accept responsibility, for example, taking the register, becoming play leaders or serving on the school council. They learn to keep safe to the best of their abilities.
- Although pupils say that there is no bullying they did note that sometimes one or two people could be silly but that this is quickly resolved by staff. Pupils learn right from wrong, incidents are infrequent and the school has had no exclusions.
- The management of pupil behaviour is outstandingly good. Staff are keenly aware of pupils' difficulties and of behaviours that sometimes need supporting. This is done quietly and calmly and almost always results in little or no time lost in lessons.
- Pupils' attendance is above average. Clinics are held in school and these provide further opportunity for parents to be involved in the school's life. The school enjoys excellent partnerships with a wide range of medical, social and therapeutic services which support pupil behaviour and well-being very effectively.
- Parents agree that pupils' behaviour and safety are outstanding. They are fulsome in their praise for all aspects of the school's work.
- 'Communication passports' enable consistency across professional services through the recording of pupils' preferred learning styles and interests. The school has developed very effective systems for pupils joining and leaving the school and, as a result, pupils are very well-prepared for the next phase of their learning.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The ambition for excellence shared by the school's headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior staff has resulted in continuing development, high quality school improvement and consistent gains in pupil progress since the last inspection.

- Staff share senior leaders' aspirations and morale is outstanding. Staff training is of excellent quality and has resulted in high levels of classroom support and teaching expertise. Teachers' professional development targets are very closely matched to identified areas for school improvement and teaching is well linked to pay progression.
 - The school knows its strengths and areas for development exceptionally well. It is true to its watchword 'Never stand still'. Planning at all levels is comprehensive, highly focussed and regularly reviewed to ensure continuous improvement. Systems to check pupil progress are robust and well managed. The school constantly checks its progress against other similar schools nationally and in partnership with other local authorities.
 - Teaching is rigorously checked and, as a result, the rate of pupil progress is increasing. The good and outstanding teaching observed by inspectors matches school records very closely.
 - The curriculum is newly creative and promotes much 'learning by doing'. Pupils acquire good and outstanding literacy skills due to excellent reinforcement across all lessons. A good range of after-school clubs and residential experiences broaden pupils' learning experiences well.
 - Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Some pupils attend activities at mainstream schools and a local children's centre group joins the Nursery class each week. Pupils enjoy raising money for charity, most recently for a school in Africa. Equality of opportunity is promoted in everything the school does and any discrimination is tackled effectively to ensure that all feel part of its warm, welcoming community.
 - Partnership with parents is outstanding. Family learning sessions, workshops and coffee mornings encourage parents' involvement in school and in their child's learning. Effective use of homework and home-school diaries helps pupils to continue their learning at home in the same ways as they do in school very well.
 - Partnership with the local authority is strong and the school is subject to a light touch monitoring as a result of its outstanding effectiveness. The school's specialist work through its outreach service in other schools is very highly regarded. The school's safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are perceptive and constructive in their challenge to the school's leaders and they undertake their duties to ensure high quality teaching and pupil performance very conscientiously. As a result they know the school's strengths and areas for development very well. Governors receive high quality written reports and visit school regularly to check progress. Financial planning is excellent and governors ensure the pupil premium is allocated appropriately. Governors share the school's expectations, its future ambitions and are proud of the achievement of its pupils.
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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	111516
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	403153

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	65
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Holleran
Headteacher	Andreas Chryssafi
Date of previous school inspection	31 October 2007
Telephone number	0151 4244329
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