

Brackensdale Infant School

Walthamstow Drive, Mackworth Estate, Derby, DE22 4BS

Inspection dates

30 April–1 May 2013

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		Requires improvement	3
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

- The school does not pitch its targets for pupils high enough because it does not aim at them making good progress. As a result progress is steady but not good.
- Because progress is not good, pupils are not catching up on pupils nationally as they move through the school.
- By the end of Year 2, pupils still have problems understanding the meaning of words or combining letter sounds into words.
- They are also behind in their understanding of number and their writing.
- Some leaders' understanding of data is not sharp enough. This means assessment information is not used to best effect to raise achievement.
- Teachers do not always adjust work in lessons quickly enough if they find it is too hard or too easy for pupils.
- Marking does not consistently help pupils see how to improve.
- Pupils do not always move sensibly around the corridors, and sometimes a few do not behave well in lessons.
- Some pupils do not attend school often enough and this limits their chances of making good progress.

The school has the following strengths

- The school leaders have recently made improvements to teaching and learning.
- They check carefully on how good teaching is.
- Governors, many of whom are new, support the headteacher well in decisions about pay and spending. Specific training is helping them to fulfil their role in holding the school to account.
- Last year, the gap in attainment between pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding and their classmates closed considerably.
- Pupils in Class 7 (the enhanced resource base) make excellent all-round progress.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and the school keeps them safe. All parents spoken to agree. They are very positive about the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 18 lessons. These included two that were observed jointly with the headteacher. They also observed play and lunchtimes.
- Discussions were held with pupils, governors, staff, and a representative of the local authority.
- Not enough parents responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) for the result to be analysed, but account was taken of parents' views expressed by letter and those gained through informal discussions with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents, including information about pupils' progress and attendance, the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation document and records and policies about safeguarding.
- Inspectors also examined the work in pupils' books, sampled sessions where pupils were learning letters and sounds (phonics), and listened to pupils read.

Inspection team

Doris Bell, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter Heaton

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This infant school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Nursery and Reception children are taught in single age groups. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are taught in mixed-age classes, grouped mostly by ability.
- The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the normal times is above average.
- The school has specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs, specifically autism. Known in school as 'Class 7', the provision caters for 11 pupils with varying degrees of autism from Reception to Year 2. A further 17 pupils are integrated, with resourced provision, into the rest of the school.
- The school shares its expertise in teaching children with autism with other schools.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding, known as the pupil premium, is above average. This funding is for children in local authority care, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, and children with a parent in the armed forces.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action is average, but the proportion supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is high.
- As this is an infant school, there are no government floor standards setting the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure consistently good teaching throughout the school by:
 - setting higher targets for pupils, aimed at them making good progress, and holding staff to account for pupils' progress towards these targets
 - making sure teachers adjust work in lessons quickly when it is too hard or too easy
 - improving marking so pupils understand how to do their work better and making sure pupils respond to what the marking says.
- Raise achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - in reading, improving pupils' ability to combine letters into words in order to read more fluently, and making sure pupils understand the meaning of the words they read
 - in writing, improving pupils' handwriting and organisation of their work, making sure adults always demonstrate good handwriting, and in lessons, moving them sooner on to tasks that enable them to use and practise their writing skills
 - in mathematics, ensuring pupils have a good grasp of basic number skills, sharpening their mental mathematics skills and giving them more opportunities to use their number skills to solve mathematical problems.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - collating all available assessment information more clearly and analysing progress more sharply
 - ensuring subject leaders and leaders of different age groups have a good understanding of how to analyse, interpret and use published as well as in-school data to raise attainment
 - encouraging consistently good behaviour around the corridors and in the small number of lessons where poor behaviour interrupts learning.

- Find ways to improve attendance by, for example, impressing on parents the importance of making sure their children attend school regularly so that they can learn and make progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children start school with skills that are well below those expected for their age. Attainment is still well below average when they leave Year 2 and has remained stubbornly so for several years. Pupils' progress is not good enough to raise standards rapidly. It is hindered by poor attendance, above average mobility, and some weaknesses in teaching, leadership and management.
- When reading, pupils know the sounds letters make (phonics) but find difficulty combining letters to make words. Nevertheless, reading standards at the end of Year 2 have improved in two of the past three years.
- Writing is improving this year. More-able pupils can retell a story confidently, and demonstrate a good grasp of early spelling skills. Other pupils do not organise their writing well enough and poor handwriting often makes it difficult to read. The school has recently introduced a new handwriting scheme to tackle the problem.
- In mathematics, pupils' understanding of number is not secure and their mental recall of number facts is weak. Their books show they sometimes complete a range of mathematical calculations correctly but do not have the opportunity to consolidate what they have learned by solving problems to gain greater confidence in using and understanding number.
- The gap in attainment between pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding closed in 2012. Although standards were still well below average, their attainment matched that of other pupils in reading and mathematics, and was only half a term behind in writing. The pupils benefited from one-to-one and small group tuition, and there is evidence that many made better progress as a result.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are taught with the rest of their age group make progress similar to that of other pupils. They benefit from carefully selected support programmes and input from well-briefed support staff.
- Pupils in Class 7 make excellent progress given their starting points. Their learning benefits from highly skilled teaching. Learning is broken down into very small steps when necessary, and any progress is meticulously tracked and recorded. Learning is adjusted throughout the day, and from day to day, to keep it moving forward, or to deal with any loss of understanding, whatever the reason.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching does not consistently get the best from the pupils. Expectations are not always appropriately high, and learning is not adjusted quickly enough in lessons to take account of what pupils show they can or cannot do.
- Marking does not always give pupils enough guidance on how to improve. When it does, there is little evidence that pupils have the opportunity to respond. Handwriting is an issue for pupils, and staff do not set a good example for them when marking their work, or scribing for them in lessons.
- Pupils are sometimes kept together for too long and do not have enough time to complete the

tasks prepared for them. The emphasis on using talk to prepare for writing successfully encourages pupils to use their imagination and think about structure before they write. However, they do not always get on to the writing itself. This limits their progress.

- Where teaching is strongest, teaching and support staff make valuable contributions to pupils' learning by asking probing questions, developing pupils' vocabulary and requiring pupils to answer fully. Pupils are also successfully encouraged to talk to each other before answering. They then gather their thoughts and answer more reflectively.
- The daily teaching of phonics is helping pupils to read but fluency in reading is compromised because pupils tend to sound out every word, including those they know, as they read. The weakest readers can tell a story through its pictures but make little attempt to read the words. More-able pupils can say the words but do not always understand them or the meaning behind them.
- Staff in Class 7 have in-depth knowledge of each pupil and tailor learning programmes precisely to their individual needs. This leads to excellent progress in learning and personal development. In the rest of the school, teachers take account of what disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs need to learn as they plan, and they use their support staff well to help the pupils make the same progress as all other pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' attitudes to learning vary across the school and their behaviour is mixed. In a small number of lessons, particularly where a high proportion of pupils with challenging behaviour are grouped together, learning can be interrupted by poor behaviour. When this happens it is because pupils' concentration drifts and staff do not intervene quickly enough to get them back on task.
- Attendance improved from 2010 and came close to the national average by July last year, but systems for improving attendance have lost their impetus this year. The school continues to check on all absences, and is seeking further ways to reduce them. Attendance is lower for groups of pupils whose circumstances might make them vulnerable than for other pupils. This affects progress and causes overall achievement to be lower than it might otherwise be.
- Teachers mostly manage pupils' behaviour well in class, enabling most lessons to proceed uninterrupted. Many pupils have good attitudes to their learning and their work. Pupils' behaviour is consistently well managed in Class 7 because skilled staff work hard to get the best from them despite their difficulties.
- Behaviour is usually good outdoors at play and lunchtimes. Around the school, however, pupils can be noisy, sometimes shouting in corridors. The school has had 'purges' on this sort of behaviour but does not maintain a consistent drive to eliminate it by tackling it systematically enough.
- Pupils say they feel very safe in school. Those parents, whose views inspectors could ascertain all speak very positively about the school, saying their children enjoy it, feel valued and like their teachers. At play and lunchtimes, pupils are proud to take on roles as 'mini-leaders', responsible for getting out games and helping others to play them.
- The school acknowledges that bullying does occur. Pupils too, say there is some bullying. They know that bullying is more than just falling out occasionally, and that constantly teasing or

hurting someone is wrong. However, they have confidence in the staff to help them with any concerns they may have, and know to tell an adult if they are worried about anything. They say adults help well when there are problems.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- No all leaders of different age groups and subjects have a strong enough understanding of how to interpret, analyse and use data, especially published data, to raise achievement more rapidly. While it has comprehensive information about each pupil's progress, the school does not systematically collate that information to give a precise view of progress over time.
 - Targets for pupils have not been demanding enough because they were not based on an expectation of rapid enough progress and, until recently, this has not been sufficiently challenged. Nevertheless, school improvement planning sets the right priorities for the school, because leaders have a realistic view of where it is at in general and what it needs to do to improve.
 - The school has addressed the recommendations from the previous inspection. Accurate monitoring of teaching and learning, accompanied by carefully selected professional development opportunities, has led to clear improvement for individual teachers.
 - Systems for managing teachers' performance are secure, even though targets for pupils' progress have previously been undemanding. The secure systems, correct priorities and evidence of improvements to teaching show the school has capacity for further improvement.
 - The school does much to foster equality of opportunity and to tackle discrimination of any sort. For example, it uses National Autistic Society materials to help pupils accept others and learn that it is 'OK to be different'. Parents value this greatly. Provision in Class 7 is managed very well.
 - The local authority provides light touch support for the school because it feels the school is doing a good job for its very diverse population and the issues it faces.
 - Subjects are brought together in topics that promote learning and personal development, and raise pupils' awareness of different faiths and cultures at home and abroad. Moral and social development is given high priority as the school seeks, not always entirely successfully, to foster good behaviour.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governors realise that some of them have more to do to understand fully the wide range of data available to them. However, training is already helping governors, including the many new ones, to understand their role in supporting the school and challenging it to do better. Their links with different aspects of the school's work is helping, and there is a clear determination to take those links further. Improvements in hand mean that there is no requirement for an external review of governance at this stage. Governors know about teachers' performance, and where stronger or weaker teaching occurs. They support the headteacher in making decisions about salary increases. They check the impact of pupil premium money and know how it is being used to close gaps in learning. They keep a close eye on spending. Safeguarding procedures meet current 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

Unique reference number	112737
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	412577

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joanne Willoughby
Headteacher	Diane Reddish
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2010
Telephone number	01332 348314
Fax number	01332 348314
Email address	admin@brackensdalei.derby.sch.uk

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