

Brookland Infant and Nursery School

Elm Drive, Cheshunt, Hertfordshire, EN8 0RX

Inspection dates 15–16 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Brookland is a happy, calm and purposeful school. Staff have established very good relationships with pupils and manage behaviour very well. Pupils quickly gain confidence and cooperate well with one another.
- The school is led and managed well. The headteacher is an excellent role model for others and is supported well by governors and other senior leaders. She has created a strong team of teachers and teaching assistants who have a successful and very consistent approach to teaching.
- Teaching is consistently good and some is outstanding. Teachers plan activities that interest and engage pupils well. They mark pupils work regularly and give them good advice on how to improve.
- Pupils achieve well and their attainment has been improving. They make good progress in all subjects and reach higher standards than the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils are happy at school. They like their teachers and enjoy their learning. They feel safe and are well looked after.
- Children quickly settle into the Early Years Foundation Stage in its caring atmosphere. The wide range of engaging activities available and the stimulating displays capture children's imagination well and help them to make good progress in all areas of learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding. In some lessons, the pace of learning is too slow or the activity planned for more-able pupils is too easy.
- Pupils do not do as well in writing as they do in reading and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 24 lessons or parts of lessons, including six which were observed jointly with senior school leaders. They also looked at pupils’ written work.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and five other governors, the headteacher and other school leaders, and, by telephone, a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to one group of pupils and informally with other pupils in lessons and around the school. An inspector listened to other pupils reading and talked to them about their reading habits.
- Several of the school’s documents were examined. These included: the school’s own evaluation of its performance and its improvement plan; the school’s information about pupils’ progress and the support given to disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs; evidence about the quality of teaching; and records relating to behaviour, safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of 63 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 32 responses to a paper version of the questionnaire, together with the views expressed by parents as they arrived at school to pick up their children. They analysed 30 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

James McVeigh, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Bimla Thakur

Additional Inspector

Robert Greatrex

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Brookland Infant and Nursery School is larger than the average-sized primary school. There are two Nursery classes and three classes in each year group. The majority of children start school in the Nursery, but around a third do so in Reception.
- The large majority of pupils come from a White British background and the remainder from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. There are fewer pupils than average who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (extra government funding for specific groups of pupils including those known to be eligible for free school meals and children in local authority care) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above the national average, and the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school has recently completed a building programme to create extra space and the number of pupils on roll has increased significantly.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment in writing by ensuring teachers build upon pupils' prior attainment straightaway during the transition period from Reception into Year 1.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring teachers provide activities that stretch all pupils, particularly the more-able
 - ensuring a good pace of learning is maintained in all lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Nursery or Reception class with skills, knowledge and abilities similar to or below those expected for their age. Children quickly settle in the caring atmosphere and learn to get along with others. With good teaching in the bright, stimulating environment, they make good progress in all areas of learning and enter Year 1 with skills and abilities just above age-related expectations.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1, particularly in mathematics. By the end of Year 2, pupils' standards in reading and writing are above the national averages, though standards in writing are lower than in reading. Standards in mathematics are better than in reading and writing. Pupils learn effective strategies to apply their numeracy skills in a good number of different contexts, such as creating bar charts to show which is the most 'popular' dinosaur.
- The school encourages pupils to read effectively, for example, by advising parents how to support their children with reading. Pupils enjoy reading and regularly take books from the library to read at home. Lessons often introduce complex vocabulary; for example, pupils in Year 1 used the words 'brontosaurus' and 'omnivore' when they sang the 'dinosaur' song.
- Pupils master phonics (the sounds letters make) quickly because teachers speak clearly and model pronunciation accurately. Pupils in the early stages of learning to read soon develop successful strategies to decipher unfamiliar words. Pupils' performance in the 2013 phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 was above the national average.
- The performance of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is monitored very closely to ensure the extra teaching support, including from well-trained teaching assistants, is well targeted and effective. Teachers plan work that will meet pupils' individual needs, good use is made of external agencies, such as hearing loss specialists, and parents are kept well informed. Consequently, these pupils make good progress from their starting points. Also, the small group of pupils who speak English as an additional language make at least as good progress as their peers.
- Less-advantaged pupils make good progress. The school uses the extra funding to support them effectively, for example, through help for individuals to reach speech and language targets. In 2012, the attainment gap between pupils in Year 2 who were eligible for the pupil premium and others was around eight months in writing and reading and five months in mathematics. In 2013, the gap had closed to four months in reading and writing and four months in mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers are remarkably consistent in their approach, such as in planning and presenting lessons. Expected learning outcomes are explained clearly to pupils, and teachers use pupils' ideas to develop success criteria (steps to be taken for a successful outcome) so that pupils know what to do.
- Teachers have established excellent relationships with pupils and manage classes really well. Pupils gain confidence, become fully engaged in activities and begin to develop independence in their learning. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils' behaviour and work ethic.

Behaviour management is a great strength of the school. Adults model calmness in all situations and regularly praise good behaviour so that pupils listen and concentrate well.

- Teachers plan activities that interest and motivate pupils. In an information and communication technology lesson in Year 1, pupils were fully engrossed using a software programme to design and paint 'volcanic swamps for dinosaurs'.
- Teaching assistants are well trained and effectively deployed to support identified pupils' learning in lessons or in one-to-one interventions. A small group of lower-ability pupils made good progress in understanding measurement because the teaching assistant involved everyone in a fun game about designing a scale for measuring distance.
- Teachers usually plan a range of activities to meet the needs of all pupils. However, the more able pupils are not always moved on to harder tasks quickly enough. For example, teachers do not provide hard enough work in writing during the first few weeks when pupils are settling into Year 1. Occasionally, the pace of learning in lessons is not brisk enough, for example, when introductions go on too long, so that a few pupils lose concentration.
- The school's focus on learning how to learn is helping pupils to develop the characteristics of effective learners. For example, pupils are learning about the value of perseverance and working as a team.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, adults provide a wide range of engaging activities linked closely to children's learning needs. In a Reception class, children were actively engaged in counting objects and using number lines in different ways, for example, when 'building inspectors' were evaluating and comparing their brick towers. Displays, rich in text, throughout the Reception classrooms and an emphasis on writing promote the acquisition of language and writing skills very well.
- The school's policy about marking of written work is followed closely. Teachers' feedback is effective in raising achievement. Teachers highlight in pink examples of good work that match the success criteria and indicate what needs to improve in green. Pupils know the system well and are able to assess their own and their classmates' work, as well as improve their own. Pupils take pride in completing the exercises in their books.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils like their teachers. They look forward to coming to school, where they feel cared for, safe and secure. As one parent said, 'My son would come in on Saturday if he could.' Pupils find their lessons interesting and know their teachers value them. Parents say children settle in quickly and teachers go out of their way to help.
- Pupils say that poor behaviour is uncommon. They understand they need to behave well in order to succeed at school. They know the school's behaviour management system and stick by the rules. Pupils want to learn. They share resources fairly and listen to other pupils' ideas sensibly when collaborating in groups. However, when the pace of learning slows, such as in overlong introductions, pupils, particularly boys, become restless and less attentive.
- Around the school, pupils are polite and considerate of others. In the playground, they get along well and always find someone to play with. Pupils eagerly take on roles of responsibility. For example, playground monitors help to distribute play equipment and organise play activities, and door monitors help to regulate entry in and out of the dining room.

- Pupils have a good understanding of bullying for their age. They know it is ongoing rather than a short disagreement and that it can happen in a variety of forms. They would tell an adult if they saw it happening and know that the adult would sort it out, but they say it does not happen often.
- Pupils are learning how to be healthy and keep themselves safe. They know about healthy diets and the need to have a balance of different foods at each meal. They know about fire safety and how to avoid danger when crossing the road. The school promotes walking to school to both parents and pupils.
- Pupils' attendance has been close to the national average for the last three years and most pupils attend regularly. The school is making strenuous efforts to promote higher attendance, for example, by promptly following up first-day absences and involving the local attendance officer in liaising with hard-to-reach families.

The leadership and management are good

- Brookland is a happy and welcoming school with a calm, friendly and purposeful atmosphere. Adults work together smoothly as a team, being consistent in their dealings with pupils and continually modelling the behaviour expected.
- The school is led and managed well. The headteacher in particular is an excellent professional role model for others and has guided the school carefully through the recent upheaval of building works and expansion of the school population. She has high expectations and a clear vision for the school, shared with all stakeholders and expressed in the school's aim, 'Enjoyment of learning, achievement for all'. She is ably supported by other leaders with key responsibilities.
- Improving teaching is a central focus for the school. Senior leaders regularly check the quality of teaching, including through lesson observations and looking at pupils' work. Targets set for each teacher, linked to the Teachers' Standards and pupils' progress, are suitably challenging. Comprehensive records are maintained to ensure teaching improves. Teachers are supported well in their professional development. For example, training courses are available to improve teachers' skills in identified areas, regular staff meetings include time for sharing best practice, teachers plan together and moderate pupils' work with staff from other schools and new teachers have an experienced senior colleague to act as a mentor. Middle leaders are well supported in their roles. They have good opportunities to develop their leadership skills further, including through external professional development courses.
- Senior leaders have an accurate view of how well the school is doing and have a clear, prioritised plan for improvement. Pupils' progress is constantly monitored and recorded in a clear fashion. Pupils who are in danger of underachieving are identified quickly so that appropriate extra support can be put in place.
- The school has established good relationships with parents, who are very confident that their children are well looked after and are making good progress. Parents speak of the good support they get from school to help their children at home. A recent workshop about reading for parents of Reception children was very well attended. Parents spoke highly of the helpfulness of the presentation and the opportunity to have their questions answered. The school ensures equality of opportunity for all and discourages all forms of discrimination. Extra support is provided for less-advantaged pupils to achieve as well as their peers.

- The Early Years Foundation Stage is well organised. Assessment of children's progress is detailed and well recorded so that planned activities can be well matched to children's developing needs. Transition into the Early Years Foundation Stage is well thought-out and ensures children settle in quickly. The local authority uses the department as a model of good practice for other schools.
- The school provides a broad and balanced range of subjects. A central theme each term, such as 'Dinosaur roar', links subjects together well, making activities more meaningful to pupils. Each topic begins with a 'wow' factor such as a visit that triggers enthusiasm and a desire to learn.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through, for example, assemblies and visits. In the calm, orderly atmosphere of the school, children quickly learn right from wrong and the consequences of the choices they make. They know they should be kind to everyone and say 'sorry' and mean it when necessary. Pupils have learned about different religions and are aware of the multicultural nature of the country. They model the respect they see between their teachers and others when they are working or playing together.
- The local authority supports the school well, providing an objective external view of its performance.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Following a skills audit, the governing body has taken advantage of training to further improve its understanding of school information. Governors are well informed about the school's performance through clear information from the headteacher, presentations from other leaders and their own focused visits. They ask searching questions about the impact of the school's initiatives on pupils' progress.
- Governors know about teachers' performance and ensure rewards for teachers are warranted. With the support of the local authority, they set robust targets for the performance of the headteacher. Governors make sound financial decisions, such as allocating the pupil premium to promote better achievement and managing the recent building works. The extra funding for primary sport will be used to develop the school's expertise in promoting a healthy lifestyle. All statutory arrangements for safeguarding are securely in place.

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	117272
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	425412

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	317
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheila Farmer
Headteacher	Debbie Hoy
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2009
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