

Bracken Leas Primary School

Magdalen Meadows, Brackley, NN13 6LF

Inspection dates

15–16 January 2014

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

- Teaching is not consistently good throughout the school and not enough pupils are making better than expected rates of progress.
- Work is sometimes too easy for the more-able pupils.
- The school development plan is not detailed enough for senior leaders to assess its success accurately.
- Not all pupils understand what they need to do before they begin their work.
- Pupils are not given enough opportunities to use their numeracy skills in different subjects.
- Teachers' marking does not always help pupils to know what they need to do next to improve their work.
- New leaders are not fully aware of pupils' progress and achievement throughout the school.

The school has the following strengths

- Children get off to a good start in the Reception class because the teaching is good.
- Arrangements for ensuring pupils' safety are outstanding. Pupils say they feel safe and enjoy school. This is reflected in their above-average attendance.
- Pupils behave well. They are courteous and polite to each other and adults.
- The development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted in the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes. They observed 26 lessons, some of which were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- They listened to some Year 1, Year 2 and Year 6 pupils reading and observed the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make). Inspectors also visited an assembly, observed break and lunch times and looked carefully at the work in pupils' books.
- Discussions were held with groups of pupils, staff and members of the governing body. An inspector also spoke on the telephone to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents from the 83 online responses to the Parent View questionnaire and the paper questionnaire distributed by school to parents earlier this academic year. They met informally with a number of parents and carers at the beginning of the school day. The returns from 33 staff questionnaires were also considered.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including: the school development plan; the school's own assessment data and analysis of its strengths and weaknesses; policies and records relating to safeguarding, attendance and behaviour; and information on pupils' progress and attainment, the performance of teachers and the work of the governing body.

Inspection team

Valerie Palmer, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Alwyne Jolly	Additional Inspector
Deirdre Lyddy	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Bracken Leas Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- Only a very small number of pupils are supported by the pupil premium. This is extra funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in the care of the local authority and other groups.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is regularly good or better by ensuring that:
 - marking clearly informs pupils what they need to do next in order for them to improve their work
 - pupils understand what they have to do before they begin their work.
- Increase rates of progress across the school by making sure that:
 - more-able pupils are set hard enough work that enables them to reach the standards of which they are capable
 - more opportunities are provided for pupils to apply and practise their mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Improve leadership and management so that:
 - the school development plan provides specific detail that enables the success of initiatives to be accurately assessed
 - the newly appointed leaders are more involved in checking pupils' progress so that all areas of weakness can be quickly identified and addressed.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because progress is not as good as it should be. Children are assessed by the school as usually starting in Reception with skills and knowledge typically expected for their age, and they leave Year 6 with standards in reading, writing and mathematics which are average. Progress varies from year group to year group but not enough pupils make more than ordinarily expected progress in English and mathematics.
- Children in Reception make good progress as a result of a curriculum which provides many opportunities for them to find things out for themselves both indoors and outside. They are confident, articulate and have good social skills and achieve above-average expectations by the time they enter Year 1.
- At the end of Year 2, in 2013, pupils reached above-average standards in reading. Standards were average in mathematics and writing. Although this is a decline from standards reached in the previous two years, it reflects similar rates of progress owing to the different starting points of the pupils involved.
- In the 2013 Year 1 national screening of pupils' knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make), the proportion of pupils reaching the nationally expected level was below average, although this was an improvement on the 2012 result. Year 2 pupils in 2013 went on to achieve above-average standards in reading as a result of accessing additional reading activities. By the time pupils leave Year 6, they are fluent readers who can discuss authors, the type of books they prefer and can empathise with characters' emotions.
- At the end of Key Stage 2 in 2013, the proportion of pupils making expected progress was average in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion exceeding expected progress was below average in all three subjects.
- Currently, the school's own data show that progress is accelerating in Key Stage 2, particularly in Year 5 and Year 6. Year 6 pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and the school assesses them to be on track to achieve above-average standards in English and mathematics.
- The school has correctly focused on improving pupils' achievement in mathematics, and progress is accelerating in most year groups. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to use and apply their numeracy skills in the work they do in other subjects.
- The small numbers of pupils supported by the pupil premium make similar and frequently better progress than their peers. The extra funding has been used well to employ and train additional adults to support eligible pupils and to ensure that these pupils can fully take part in all school activities. Because the numbers are small, it is not possible to comment on the relative attainment of eligible pupils in Year 6 in 2013 without risk of identifying individual pupils.
- As a result of good support from teaching assistants, frequently on a one-to-one basis, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress in English and mathematics.
- The new funding for primary school sport has been allocated to provide an all-weather pitch to promote greater engagement in sporting activities for pupils at all times, training for teachers in

the teaching of gymnastics and the employment of an area sports coordinator. More pupils are becoming increasingly engaged with a range of activities which are promoting healthy lifestyles.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good across the school. Pupils, and particularly the more able, are given work that is too easy for them. This limits the progress they make.
- Sometimes, in lessons, teachers do not make clear to pupils what they are being asked to do before they can undertake the work set for them. This can cause unnecessary errors and learning time is lost.
- Teachers mark work regularly but the quality of marking varies. Many books have positive comments but do not tell pupils what they need to do to improve their work. However, there are some examples of good marking, not only by teachers, but also by pupils who have been given opportunities to mark their own work against specific steps for success.
- Many teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and consider carefully how to excite and engage pupils in their learning. Pupils in Year 6, while studying the poem *Jabberwocky*, combined drama and writing to bring the poem to life. Initially, pupils acted out the poem, imagining what the nonsense rhyme could mean, and then went on to write their own versions using powerful verbs and adjectives.
- Children's activities in Reception are organised carefully to ensure that adults guide and interact with children while building on their curiosity. 'Tallest' and 'shortest' were being explored, while encouraging writing and fine motor control. Children first decided the order of height for a group of children, drew pictures of the group and finally wrote their names underneath. Another group were cutting out pictures of buildings and working cooperatively to arrange them in order of height.
- Knowledgeable and skilfully trained teaching assistants provide valuable additional support, especially for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs or for those who are supported by the pupil premium. They further explain and adapt work as and when necessary so that pupils can get on and keep up with their peers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good and often exemplary. Pupils are polite, courteous, well-mannered, treat each other with respect and are very proud of their school. They move around the school site sensibly, and behaviour in the playground is very good.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils say they feel safe at school and they are knowledgeable about how to stay safe in a variety of situations. Older pupils were able to talk about keeping safe when using computers and how to keep healthy.
- Pupils are aware about the different sorts of bullying and say 'it rarely happens'. If there were a problem, they are confident an adult would sort it out. School records confirm that bullying incidents are very rare and there have been none in the past twelve months.
- Pupils understand the school rules and value the rewards which they can earn. They work and play together happily, know the difference between right and wrong and understand how their

friends and others feel.

- Some pupils enjoy taking on extra responsibilities in school. Year 6 pupils help with the younger pupils and 'man' the office at lunchtime and Year 5 pupils manage the playground apparatus at break times. The school council organises competitions and raises money for a number of charities.
- Attendance is above average. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school because 'Teachers make lessons fun.'
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good but when dull teaching makes pupils lose interest, their attention drifts and they begin to chat.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management are not good because not enough has been done to improve the quality of teaching over time. Consequently, too few pupils make good progress by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Newly appointed leaders are not fully involved in the process of regularly checking results in order to identify any weaknesses in pupils' attainment and progress so help can be quickly given to overcome any difficulties.
- The school development plan correctly identifies the main areas for improvement but the processes for identifying how progress will be checked are not clear enough.
- Following the introduction of the new appraisal policy (the school system for managing teachers' performance) targets are set annually and pay progression is linked to pupils' achievements. The system is fully understood by all staff and holds teachers to account. The quality of teaching is checked through a programme of regular lesson observations, and any training requirements are identified quickly.
- Partnerships with parents are good. Their views are sought through the annual questionnaire and parents are very supportive of the school. Parents who spoke to inspectors informally at the start of the school day commented positively on the information they received about their child's progress and attainment. Almost all parents stated, through Parent View, that their child was happy, safe, and pupils were well behaved.
- The newly developed curriculum covers a wide range of interesting themes based on economic awareness, knowledge of the world, and creativity. Visitors and visits, including residential, bring areas of study to life and provide pupils with first-hand experiences of learning. An extensive range of music and sporting opportunities enhance the strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences available.
- The local authority has provided only limited support but it visits the school annually to discuss pupils' achievements.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors support the school very well and regularly undertake training to make sure their knowledge is up to date. They frequently visit school and are knowledgeable about its strengths and weaknesses. Governors are aware of the relationship between pupil progress data and the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements. All governors take careful note of how the budget is used and know how the pupil premium funding is being spent and the impact it is having on pupils' achievements. They feel that the proposed all weather pitch to enhance pupil's continual access to sporting opportunities will be an excellent legacy from the additional sports funding and provide many new activities for all age groups. Governors make sure that the headteacher's performance management is carried out annually and understand fully the arrangements for linking teachers' pay and performance. Governors work particularly hard to ensure that statutory requirements are made regarding safeguarding.

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	121947
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	429586

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	410
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Parry
Headteacher	Colin Gynn
Date of previous school inspection	3 March 2009
Telephone number	01280 707050
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