

Brookfield Infant School

Swallow Road, Larkfield, Aylesford, Kent ME20 6PY

Inspection dates

15–16 March 2016

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher, with her senior team and staff, leads the school excellently. The school is constantly developing and improving.
- School leaders always firmly put the needs of the pupils first. This is welcomed by staff, parents and the pupils themselves. Pupils' diverse needs are very well met.
- The headteacher actively encourages 'leadership warmth' at all levels. Senior leaders are highly rigorous while caring for people and listening to them. The school is very friendly and good humoured.
- Teaching is excellent. Staff provide exciting lessons and have very high expectations of the pupils. Pupils meet these expectations.
- Pupils make excellent progress. They attain very well in reading, writing and mathematics. Many pupils reach standards which are well above average.
- Children make a very good start in the early years. They learn adeptly how to concentrate and cooperate. Staff help children develop their literacy and numeracy skills very well. There is some work for staff to do to hone further the existing good practice during lessons when pupils make choices about their activities, to make this provision outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They are consistently ready to learn. They care for each other and support each other.
- Parents really love the school. They are delighted with the progress their children make and the welcome they receive.
- Pupils who are entitled to the support of the pupil premium achieve excellently. The school spends this funding thoughtfully and wisely.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs or disability is highly effective and judiciously managed. The pupils concerned do very well.
- Governors do an exceptional job. They are very proactive and know the school in detail. They energetically support and challenge the school to do even better and try new ideas.
- The curriculum is broad and interesting. The subjects beyond English and mathematics, while well taught, are given markedly less emphasis than are English and mathematics.
- The school looks after and safeguards its pupils very carefully. Pupils feel safe and confident. Recent work to improve site security further has been carried out well.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Give a higher profile and more emphasis to the subjects other than English and mathematics.
- In the Reception classes, particularly in lessons with activities initiated and chosen by the children, develop assessment further, leading to tighter planning of learning activities and even more precise guidance and questioning of children.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The highly respected headteacher is passionate, clear-thinking and very practical. Her vision for the school is clear. It is well understood and agreed by staff and governors. One fundamental aspect is that the interests of the pupils are always put first. This is not simply a slogan. There are many examples of this in practice. For instance, when members of staff ask for changes in their working pattern, these are not agreed if they are not helpful to the pupils' interests.
- The senior leadership team is highly effective. Its members diligently assure the high quality of the school's work. They are each clear about what their responsibilities are and carry them out very rigorously. These staff also model strong teaching practice for others.
- The school's work to ensure equalities and avoid any kind of undue discrimination is very strong.
- Leaders evaluate school effectiveness accurately. They know where the school's many strengths are and keep checks on them. Staff work quickly to resolve any areas requiring attention or to try new approaches. The school improvement plan very usefully guides this work.
- The headteacher shrewdly sees the potential in her staff. She arranges well-tailored and motivating training and development opportunities for individuals. This helps them to develop their professional skills, including leadership skills, quickly. The staff team, therefore, has strength in depth.
- The staff love working together in the school. There are very high levels of trust and collaboration. Teachers and teaching assistants work excellently together. They can discuss any improvements needed together confidently and without any fear. They really appreciate the well-organised performance management process. This is rigorous and supportive, helping staff to achieve their targets.
- When any times of difficulty occur within the school community, such as an illness, the headteacher looks after those concerned with great sympathy and concern. She does so, however, while ensuring that the school continues to improve and is not distracted from its core purpose of serving the pupils.
- The subjects of English and mathematics are very well led indeed. There is a constant zeal to do everything possible to ensure that these subjects are excellently organised and taught. All the other subjects have leaders who do valuable work ensuring that they are taught to a high standard. However, these other subjects do not have such a high profile in the school. The headteacher recognises the potential value in increasing the emphasis given to these subjects.
- Teaching is developed very systematically. Teachers receive very valuable, precise feedback after observations by senior leaders. They then work diligently to make any recommended tweaks or improvements, while receiving useful help or specific training, as needed. The lessons observed by senior leaders tend to be in English and mathematics. This means that the school is not as quick to refine the teaching in the other subjects.
- The broad curriculum and well-structured assembly programme promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Pupils have many opportunities to think and reflect.
- There are many well-planned and popular clubs before and after school, which meet pupils' needs.
- Parents are understandably really delighted with the school. They feel most welcome and valued. The school really reaches out to them, listening to and acting on their suggestions and concerns. One said, 'Communication is brilliant. I would recommend this school to anybody.' Another spoke for many, when writing about the pupils: 'They are encouraged, nurtured and made to feel so important that they thrive.'
- The school connects excellently with parents. It gives out clear, detailed information and also listens carefully. Nevertheless, at the inspection announcement, out-of-date versions of a few items were on the school's website, including the policy for safeguarding pupils, even though the school had up-to-date documents available. This was quickly put right.
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability is managed excellently.
- The school spends its pupil premium funding imaginatively and with great success. Staff analyse the effectiveness of this expenditure thoroughly. They make changes for individuals and groups when helpful. These pupils achieve very highly, and often gain in self-confidence, as a result.
- The school spends its sports funding very astutely. It pays for external expertise which is used to teach the pupils directly and to train the school's own staff. Pupils all have good opportunities to be active and keep fit, in a wide range of different types of physical activity.
- The school works usefully with others, including the adjacent junior school. The local authority supports the school well.

■ The governance of the school

- The governing body is very effective and well led. Governors know the school and the community very well. They are unstinting in their commitment to both. They undertake appropriate training. Governors observe the school at work. They make themselves readily available to parents and, indeed, pupils. The governing body oversees the process for the performance management of staff very well. The governing body does the things it should do. But it is not its systems, as such, which make the governing body so effective. Rather, it is the high quality and well-informed nature of governors' debates and thinking. The headteacher very much values the lively and pragmatic discussions she and her colleagues have with governors. These can be within formal meetings or during governors' frequent visits to the school. The governors' input helps her to formulate and refine ideas. The governing body is adept at suggesting ideas for further improvement and seeing them through.
- The arrangements for safeguarding the pupils are very effective. Members of staff are well trained and clear about what they need to do in different eventualities. Senior staff and governors ensure together that there are clear and appropriate procedures for keeping the pupils safe. These take account of relevant and recent guidance as well as parents' views. Proper checks are made on staff and other adults when they are recruited, and when needed. These are recorded accurately and in a timely way. Much recent work has been done to make the school site more secure. Parents value this. Staff assess carefully the main risks associated with school activities.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Teachers explain things very clearly to their pupils. They do this in a lively, interesting and often humorous way. This thoroughly engages the pupils who really enjoy their learning.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have very high expectations of the pupils. They are very adept at adjusting the level of difficulty of work set during the lessons to suit the needs of the pupils and ensure that they are all challenged in their learning. Staff are determined that all pupils will experience genuine success.
- The staff expect pupils, as a matter of course, to talk about and describe what they are doing and thinking. This very effectively helps the pupils to understand their learning in depth. Drama activities are also used effectively in some lessons for similar purposes, and as a stimulus.
- When, as is common, individual pupils or groups make a breakthrough in their learning, or do something better than before, staff notice this and really highlight it and celebrate it. They also provide well-focused feedback on pupils' work which helps pupils achieve their targets.
- In a Year 2 mathematics lesson, the teacher explained very clearly and quickly how to think through sums that were expressed in words, so that pupils could work them out using mathematical operations. The teacher very efficiently checked pupils' understanding as the lesson went along. She made sure that there was a good level of challenge for all the pupils, by giving some slightly harder sums than others. When pupils showed new learning or improvement, she quickly recognised it by saying, for example, 'What a star. You have done it! That wasn't easy.'
- The teaching of reading is very well organised. One of its key features is 'Red Ted': read every day, talk every day. This reminds pupils to read and discuss their reading with each other, staff and their parents. Pupils learn how important and enjoyable reading can be. Their reading books are interesting and suitably challenging.
- The reading intervention programme is very effective for pupils who need it, as are other well-organised interventions. The initial and ongoing assessments of pupils who have special educational needs or disability are thorough. The specific teaching for these pupils is excellent, whether it takes place outside class or within the normal lessons.
- Staff very accurately and frequently assess Year 1 and Year 2 pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. If any pupil's learning has slowed, it is followed up straight away. Staff know these subjects very well. They are ardent about them and their expectations of the pupils are very high.
- Inspectors observed very engaging, purposeful teaching in geography, music, art, computing, physical education and other subjects beyond English and mathematics. However, there is not quite the same level of staff subject knowledge, or the use of assessment to challenge the pupils in these lessons, as there is in English and mathematics. Also, the time allocation for these subjects is not generous. These constraints reduce the scope to develop and expand the pupils' strong learning, once it has begun.

- Parents clearly notice the very many strengths in teaching. One parent understandably expressed her delight at the way her child had been challenged to do even better in writing, and, as a result, 'flew'. Another said how 'overjoyed' she was at how her child had been pushed with reading when it hadn't been easy.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The headteacher is very clear that the school must speak up for the interests of pupils, and sometimes parents, when they cannot easily do so for themselves. Pupils are very well cared for and looked after. They are listened to. Their needs, of many different kinds, are closely understood and acted on. If pupils become particularly vulnerable for any reason, the school quickly does what it can to help, support and advise. It works well with external agencies, when needed.
- Most parents find it very easy to approach the school to discuss any issues or concerns about their children. They are just as happy to speak with a teaching assistant, midday supervisor or administrator as the family liaison officer, class teacher or the headteacher, knowing that they will receive a helpful response from anyone.
- The school teaches pupils highly effectively about their safety, including e-safety.
- Most pupils attend very well. When pupils attend poorly, the school works very hard with the families to resolve any problems and reduce absence, often with great success. The school's procedures for encouraging high attendance are very well organised.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- At all ages, pupils are constantly considerate, friendly and polite. They show real empathy and respect for others. They walk around the school safely and play together excitedly, safely and very kindly. Inspectors observed examples of where pupils proactively helped each other, or offered to hold hands when they saw that another pupil – not necessarily a best friend – needed a buddy.
- Pupils can explain how good it is to have friends from different faiths and backgrounds. They are prepared excellently for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is fabulous. At the start of the day, they are immediately and eagerly immersed in productive activity, involving concentration and perseverance. They organise much of this themselves. Parents sometimes usefully read with their children at this point. As the day progresses, pupils listen very attentively in lessons. They settle to tasks enthusiastically and usually with no fuss at all. They are very keen to work together, join in and share their ideas. Pupils are highly motivated by, and responsive to, the lively and caring teaching they receive.
- Staff constantly emphasise and reinforce the kind of behaviours which help pupils to learn. For example, pupils are asked to check their work carefully and show how they check it.
- Pupils enjoy taking responsibility. Some are elected as school councillors, for example. Pupils learn simply and well about fundamental British values, including democracy and fairness.
- 'Snowdrop class' is a well-appointed, small room, used by pupils who need a short time to calm down or work through their feelings. This is an excellent, properly staffed, provision. It helps the pupils involved and keeps the main classrooms calm for all pupils. For similar but more serious reasons, the school has made a very small number of one-day exclusions within the last year. These have been correctly and caringly carried out with the pupils concerned very promptly and fully re-integrated into school life.

Outcomes for pupils are outstanding

- Pupils from the school consistently attain very highly in national testing in English and mathematics. Pupils, from all groups, make outstanding progress. There is no significant difference between the performance of the different groups, such as boys and girls. All do brilliantly.
- Pupils entitled to the support of pupil premium funding fare exceptionally well. They make very fast progress in all year groups and consistently attain better than the average for all pupils nationally. This is a remarkable outcome.

- The pupils currently in the school, from all groups, are doing as well as the cohorts before them. Their writing, for example, is of a very high standard for their age. They write increasingly at length, and appropriately for the purpose; use sentences well; choose interesting and relevant vocabulary; and use punctuation of different kinds increasingly accurately.
- Pupils' knowledge of phonics (linking letters and sounds) is strong. In 2015, the proportion of Year 1 pupils who reached the required standard in the phonics screening test was above the national average. This represented an improvement, after the school sensibly re-organised its phonics teaching. The changes made have been sustained and built on.
- The pupils who read to inspectors did so very confidently. They showed excellent comprehension and were happy to discuss their reading, showing much enjoyment and that they value books. They were able to self-correct and apply their phonics knowledge accurately.
- Pupils with special educational needs or disability make excellent progress. The school checks this very carefully.
- Pupils with particularly high abilities in English and mathematics do very well indeed. They are stretched in their thinking and reach very high standards of attainment.
- Inspectors found evidence of some strong and interesting learning for pupils in the subjects other than English and mathematics. For example, Year 2 pupils drew reasonably accurate maps of the playground with keys, while Year 1 pupils danced imaginatively with precision. Subject leaders usefully check aspects of pupils' learning in these subjects, but the school knows that more can be done to develop this work.

Early years provision

is good

- Children make a very good start in the Reception classes. They develop their learning skills, such as concentration and cooperation, quickly and well. This leads to their excellent behaviour. They enjoy learning and are delighted to talk about their activities. They are polite and helpful.
- From their starting points, pupils make consistently strong progress in all areas. They begin to read and write very well. In lessons where the teacher instructs groups or the class 'from the front', for example in phonics or numeracy lessons, the teaching is well-focused and of high quality. The learning in these lessons is brisk.
- However, in other, equally important, kinds of lessons where children make guided choices about which activities they will do, and how they will do them, there is still some room for further improvement. This is why the early years provision is not yet outstanding. The day-to-day assessments staff make of the children when they are doing the activities, although useful, are not quite as precise as they could be. This means that the adults' planning of the activities children choose, while still well done, is not quite as sharp as it could be. Adults' valuable discussions with children during the activities could be even more closely focused on the children's needs.
- In one lesson observed, children benefited from activities relevant to their interests: making cards, designing a ballet lesson, writing messages and doing craft work. They moved between these activities, indoors and outdoors, freely. They discussed their ideas usefully together and with staff. However, opportunities were occasionally missed for adults to probe children's ideas more deeply and to allow children to develop their thinking further. Sometimes, children moved on from activities rather quickly, when there was still scope for deeper learning.
- The early years provision is well led. The leader, working with her team, is moving the provision persistently and steadily towards the excellence that the school wants. She can explain and discuss the key areas which still need to be improved. In the last couple of years, the early years provision has had a longer improvement journey to make than has been needed by the older year groups and, consequently, it is not yet quite as far 'along the track'.
- The classrooms and outdoor area for the Reception classes are well organised and stimulating. The outdoor area requires some refurbishment and the school is aware of this.
- In 2015, Reception children were well prepared to join Year 1. An above-average proportion of them reached a good level of development. This represented very good progress from their starting points. The school reasonably believes that similarly good outcomes will be achieved in 2016.
- Children are looked after very well, with their safety being the highest priority of staff.

- Parents are understandably really pleased with how well their children have settled and how happy they are in the Reception classes. They appreciate the very useful information they receive from the staff. For instance, informative weekly newsletters help parents to talk to their children about learning from class activities, including the letter sounds being worked on that week.

School details

Unique reference number	118484
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10003594

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	181
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jude Johnson
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Pauline Woods
Telephone number	01732 840955
Website	www.brookfieldinfant.co.uk
Email address	office@brookfield-infant.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 February 2011

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized infant school, with six classes. It works closely with the adjacent junior school but the schools are entirely separately managed. Through the local authority, the school provides support and advice at times to other schools.
- Most pupils in the school are White British. There are no other large ethnic groups.
- A larger proportion than average of pupils is considered to be disadvantaged and entitled to the support of pupil premium funding.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed several lessons in all the classes, some jointly with the headteacher and assistant headteachers. They looked at samples of pupils' work and observed at playtimes, lunchtimes and during assemblies.
- The inspection team held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, members of staff, governors and a representative of the local authority. They met also with groups of pupils and heard Year 2 pupils read.
- Inspectors scrutinised many key documents. These included the school improvement plan, self-evaluations, local authority reports, information about how well pupils are faring academically and minutes of meetings, including those of the governing body.
- Inspectors took careful account of the views of parents. They met with parents. They considered the 44 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. They took account of the written comments from many parents.

Inspection team

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