

Bracken Leas Primary School

Magdalan Meadows, Brackley NN13 6LF

Inspection dates

24–25 May 2016

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Poor leadership has failed to improve weaknesses identified at the time of the previous full inspection.
- School leaders, including governors, have not been sufficiently ambitious for what pupils can achieve. As a result, pupil outcomes still require improvement.
- Lower-attaining pupils do not make as much progress as other pupils.
- Governors have not provided effective challenge to the headteacher and deputy headteacher. They have accepted overly positive reports on the school's performance and not enquired robustly into the factors that have led to disappointing outcomes in key areas.
- Actions taken to improve the quality of teaching have not successfully addressed all of the areas of weakness. As a result, teaching, learning and assessment still require improvement.
- Subject leaders do not have a good enough knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects to be able to drive improvement.
- In subjects other than English and mathematics, tasks given to pupils often lack challenge and do not develop subject-specific skills.
- The school has failed to promote equality of opportunity by failing to follow statutory procedures.
- Behaviour and the quality of provision in the early years have declined since the previous full inspection and these both now require improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- In some classes, effective teaching is helping pupils to make good progress in English and mathematics.
- Pupils are confident, polite and friendly. They get on well together and know how to stay safe.
- Attendance is above average.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management in the school by:
 - raising ambition across the school for what all pupils in the school are capable of achieving
 - providing senior and middle leaders with the skills necessary to identify more precisely the weaker aspects of teaching and the opportunities to remedy them
 - ensuring that governors have the skills necessary to hold the school's leaders to account and to drive school improvement
 - ensuring that school leaders, including governors, understand and follow statutory procedures to promote equality of opportunity.
- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better in order to strengthen outcomes for pupils by:
 - ensuring that teachers make use of accurate assessment information to provide work that enables pupils of all abilities, including lower-ability pupils, to make at least good progress in all subjects
 - using teaching assistants more effectively to support pupils' learning
 - eliminating the instances of low-level disruption which slow down learning.
- Improve children's outcomes in the early years by:
 - ensuring that leaders check carefully the impact of improvement strategies and adapt them promptly if required
 - improving the effectiveness of teaching, particularly when children are working on activities that they have chosen for themselves.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Newly qualified teachers should not be appointed.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Leaders have not addressed the weaknesses identified at the last full inspection with sufficient rigour. This can be seen in the decline in progress in mathematics at the end of 2015, despite this being a subject singled out as an area to improve in the previous inspection report.
- School leaders, including governors, do not have high enough expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving. They explained the low outcomes at the end of early years to inspectors by referring to the cohort as being 'boy heavy' and with skills below those typical for four-year-olds when they started at school. In the same way, performance at the end of Year 6 in mathematics was described to inspectors as 'good' even though progress in the subject was significantly below the national average.
- The previous full inspection asked the subject leaders to become more involved in checking how well pupils are learning. However, the subject leaders in English and mathematics have conducted very few observations of teaching or scrutinies of pupils' work. This means that they have not identified promptly weaknesses in teaching nor provided effective support.
- Where leaders have observed teaching or monitored work in pupils' books, their evaluations do not show insight into how teaching and learning could be improved. The lack of rigour in their evaluations of teaching helps to explain why the quality of teaching has not improved since the previous inspection.
- Leaders of subjects other than English and mathematics have not checked the quality of work in books or the progress that pupils are making. They have not quality-assured assessments teachers are making against new assessment criteria and do not know how well pupils are progressing in subjects for which they have responsibility.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. It fosters good relationships between all pupils and between pupils and staff. The school has an impressive record of raising funds for a school in Gambia and a rich range of clubs for pupils to pursue their interests. It prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain, but they would benefit from opportunities to learn more deeply about the range of faiths in Britain.
- Leaders have not ensured that the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have been fully met. Not enough of these pupils make good progress. The implementation of plans to improve their skills is not checked rigorously enough to ensure that daily teaching is meeting the needs of these pupils.
- There are very few pupils in the school eligible for support through the additional government funding provided to assist disadvantaged pupils. The school does ensure that the funding it receives is targeted appropriately and evaluates its impact. However, the progress of disadvantaged pupils is no better than the progress of other pupils.
- The primary school physical education and sports funding is used well. Specialist coaches have helped improve the confidence and skills of staff taking physical education lessons. The school has an excellent reputation for its range of extra-curricular sporting activities and its success in inter-school competitions.
- The school meets its duty in setting targets for teachers' performance and making decisions about pay increases linked to pupil progress. Recently, these targets have been more precisely defined so that progress towards them can be easily measured.
- In implementing its behaviour policy, the school failed in its duty to follow statutory procedures which exist to promote equality of opportunity.
- The local authority has not provided effective support since the school was judged to require improvement. In a number of key areas, the school's performance should have raised concerns. However, it is only recently that any support has been provided. Recommendations by the local authority that the school's leaders should visit effective local providers have not always been taken up. School leaders explained to inspectors that they felt let down by the local authority when it sought advice on the correct implementation of its behaviour policy.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body has had a misplaced confidence in the current leadership team. At the end of the summer term, the headteacher is leaving the school and the deputy headteacher is retiring. A new deputy headteacher has been appointed and will take up her post in September. Governors are now working with the local authority to secure a headteacher who has the qualities needed to improve the school quickly.

- Governors have not challenged the overly positive interpretation of the school's performance given to them by the school's leaders because they have lacked ambition for what the pupils should achieve.
- Governors do ensure that the school accounts appropriately for the use of pupil premium and the primary PE and sport premium.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The safeguarding governor regularly visits the school and ensures that appropriate procedures are in place to check the safety and well-being of pupils and that all training is up to date. Governors too have received appropriate training. The school works closely with parents and other agencies to establish a safe culture for pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement because in some classes and subjects provision is not enabling pupils to make good progress.
- Progress in lessons is not good enough when teachers do not plan well to meet the range of abilities in their class. This has a negative impact on all groups of pupils including higher-attaining pupils. On too many occasions, the most able pupils have to complete work that is too easy for them. At other times, when they have completed work that has been set for them, they are not provided with additional activities to deepen their learning.
- When lesson introductions do not hold the pupils' attention, some pupils chatter with their friends and learning is disrupted. In some instances, lesson introductions fail to prepare lower-attaining pupils for the rest of the lesson. When this happens, these pupils do not make good progress because they are either uncertain of what they have to do or lack the necessary skills to successfully complete their work.
- Teaching in subjects other than in English and mathematics helps pupils gain a basic knowledge of, for example, historical and geographical facts. However, often, all pupils complete the same tasks and this means that the level of challenge for many is insufficient. Teachers' feedback in these books rarely helps pupils improve their understanding of the subject being taught and teachers' expectations regarding spelling and presentation are too low.
- In key stage 2, very little science work is recorded. The work that is recorded shows that, typically, all pupils tackle the same tasks and that scant attention is paid to developing the pupils' ability to work scientifically. For example, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to select or plan their own enquiries.
- Where learning is most effective, pupils are fully engaged and interested in the tasks provided. They work well together, for example using computers to design posters, and drama to gain a deeper understanding of religious beliefs. Good examples were seen in some classes of teachers using questions to deepen pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Teaching is also effective when teachers have drawn on strategies gained through high-quality training. Pupils in a key stage 1 class worked productively and effectively as they moved words and punctuation around on a washing line to gain an understanding of sentence structure. These pupils have made good progress in writing this year.
- Most lessons are supported effectively by teaching assistants. Examples were observed where teaching assistants supported learning very effectively by explaining concepts that pupils were finding difficult or by asking questions that challenged pupils to apply their learning. However, too often, teaching assistants are passive observers and are not used to best effect.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are polite and friendly to one another and respectful of adults. When lessons are well planned, they show maturity and work well together.
- Pupils' understanding of personal safety is good because lessons and assemblies include reminders about personal well-being. They have also benefited from sessions, including input from a governor, on cyber bullying and the risks of sharing personal information online.
- Pupils say that staff listen and respond to any worries they may encounter both in and outside of school. They say there is little bullying and any that does occur is dealt with quickly.
- Pupils respond enthusiastically to the good range of opportunities provided at midday and after school. In

the last school year, over 300 pupils represented the school in sporting activities. The school has an orchestra and two choirs which regularly perform in the community.

- Pupils have an excellent reputation for their attitudes when they represent the school, for example on educational visits.
- Pupils learn about British values both through the curriculum and assemblies. Strengths in this area are the opportunities they have to engage in democratic elections for house captains, the school council and the eco committee. Their knowledge of the range of cultures and different faiths in Britain is a weaker area of their personal development.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. This represents a decline since the last inspection, when behaviour was good.
- Too often pupils lose concentration and chatter in lessons. This is particularly evident when they do not understand what they are expected to do or if they find the tasks too easy. Forty-nine pupils from Years 1 to 6 completed Ofsted's online questionnaire. One third of these reported that behaviour in lessons is not good. Pupils were much more positive about behaviour around the school.
- Comments made by pupils who spoke to inspectors confirmed that lessons are quite regularly affected by low-level disruption.
- Work in pupils' books, particularly in subjects such as science, history and geography, shows that pupils do not consistently take pride in their work. Some pupils take little care in answering thoughtfully, spelling accurately or presenting their work neatly.
- Pupils enjoy their time at school and this is reflected in above-average attendance and good punctuality.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Pupils usually leave the school with standards above, but not significantly above, the national average. However, in 2015 a dip in mathematics meant that the proportion of pupils who attained the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics combined was lower than the national average.
- Progress in key stage 2 varies between subjects. In 2015, it was good in reading and writing but disappointing in mathematics. Overall progress made by key stage 2 pupils compared unfavourably with other pupils with the same starting points nationally.
- There are significant variations between the predicted outcomes for boys and girls in the current Year 6. For example, 79% of girls are predicted to meet the expected standard in writing but just 56% of boys.
- The number of disadvantaged pupils in the school is small. Typically, these pupils make the same progress as other pupils in the school. Current data shows that disadvantaged pupils are less likely to be working at the standards expected for their ages than other pupils.
- There is considerable variation in the rates of progress made by different groups of pupils in key stage 2. In 2014 and 2015, pupils with below-average outcomes at the end of key stage 1 made much less progress than those who had attained high standards at the end of key stage 1. This is because the less effective teaching and management of behaviour are having a particularly negative impact on the progress of lower-attaining pupils. When explanations lack clarity, lower-attaining pupils find it more difficult to concentrate and keep up with their peers.
- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities matches the inconsistency in the quality of teaching that remains in the school. Where teachers match work to learning needs identified in their individual education plans, pupils gain the knowledge and skills required to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, some teachers do not tailor their provision carefully, and where this occurs pupils do not make enough progress.
- Scores in phonics screening checks in key stage 1 have been below average in the two years since the previous inspection. There is an improving trend but the scores for non-disadvantaged pupils in the school are well below what this group scores nationally.
- Outcomes in subjects such as science, geography and history are not carefully assessed. Work in pupils' books does not show good learning. Discussions with pupils indicate that they are not gaining the subject-specific knowledge or skills of which they are capable. This is because teaching in these subjects does not reflect high enough expectations or offer sufficient challenge.
- Pupils' outcomes in sporting activities are good. The school uses its primary school physical education and sports funding effectively and large numbers of pupils participate in physical activities. In recent years teams from the school have been county champions in rugby, swimming and cricket.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- School assessments show that children enter the school with skills that are typical for their age. Their progress requires improvement because not enough of them reach or exceed a good level of development.
- In 2014 and 2015, the proportions of children reaching a good level of development were below the national averages. In both years, boys' outcomes were well below girls'. The weakest areas for boys were reading and writing.
- Predicted outcomes for children currently in the Reception classes are that both boys and girls will attain higher than in the past. However, inspectors' evaluations of children's written work indicate that these predictions are over-positive.
- Adults miss opportunities to extend learning when pupils choose their own activities. The subject leader acknowledged that staff prefer working with children on activities that the adults have chosen rather than when pupils are learning through play.
- Teaching assistants are not deployed effectively. For example, when children were watching a computer programme teaching them about the sounds letters make, the assistant sat behind the children and so was unable to help those who were struggling to say out loud the sounds being displayed.
- The leadership of the early years requires improvement. The action plan to improve outcomes does not have precise targets or identify the key actions that the school is taking to raise standards. The leader does not check the impact of the implementation of the plan effectively. Consequently, there is a lack of clarity about how successfully the improvement strategies are working and whether they need adapting.
- Changes made to the curriculum are beginning to have a positive impact. For example, resources to teach phonics are improving the children's ability to read and spell with confidence. It is particularly noticeable how confident children are using technology to extend their learning of these and other skills.
- Improvements made to the learning environment, both inside and outside, are also having a positive effect. Attractive areas have been established, for example the Creation Station, where particular skills can be developed. Children play and learn together well in these areas.
- Children generally play alongside one another happily and are beginning to learn to take turns and take into account the thoughts and feelings of others. However, at times they show that they still have some way to go before being prepared for learning in Year 1. For example, on a number of occasions learning was disrupted by children talking over the teacher or shouting out answers.
- Parents who spoke with inspectors, or who made comments about the Reception Year using the online questionnaire, are mostly happy with the start to school their children make. There is agreement that children are safe and well cared for. Negative comments included references to the children's behaviour and a lack of challenge for the most able children. The inspection findings confirmed these concerns.
- It is difficult to compare the standards of disadvantaged children with the progress of others as the numbers are so small. However, senior leaders do ensure that additional funding for disadvantaged children is used to support their individual needs.

School details

Unique reference number	121947
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10009096

This inspection 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	406
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Parry
Headteacher	Colin Gynn
Telephone number	01280 707050
Website	http://brackenleasschool.co.uk
Email address	head@bracken.northants-ed.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 January 2014

Information about this school

- Bracken Leas Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by additional government funding, the pupil premium, at 5% is well below average. This funding provides additional support for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all classes to observe teaching. Some of these visits took place with school leaders.
- Inspectors asked pupils about their learning and what it is like to be a pupil at the school.
- Pupils' workbooks were scrutinised and inspectors heard some pupils read.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed around the school.
- Inspectors took account of the 113 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) and held brief discussions with parents at the beginning of the school day.
- Seven responses to the staff questionnaire were received and analysed, as were 49 pupil responses to their questionnaire.
- Discussions took place with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, teachers, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Documents were analysed, including the school's self-evaluation statement, school development plan, minutes of governing body meetings and information about pupils' achievement.
- Records relating to attendance and safeguarding were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Tony O'Malley, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Caroline Evans	Ofsted Inspector
Shaheen Hussain	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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