



# Bracken Leas Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 121947  
**LEA** Northamptonshire  
**Inspection number** 281138  
**Inspection dates** 7 March 2006 to 8 March 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Eira Gill AI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Magdalen Meadows
<b>School category</b>	Community		Brackley
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11		Northamptonshire NN13 6LF
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01280 707050
<b>Number on roll</b>	476	<b>Fax number</b>	01280 707051
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Sue Hampshire
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	6 March 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr David Toman

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Bracken Leas is a larger than average primary school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average. Children come into the school with knowledge and skills as would be expected for their age. The number of pupils joining or leaving the school between reception and Year 6 has been high. There are very few pupils who are entitled to free school meals.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

The effectiveness of this school is satisfactory and it gives sound value for money. Its own view of its effectiveness is accurate in relation to achievement and the quality of teaching but it has a slightly rosier view of leadership and effectiveness, which it evaluates as good.

In the most recent national tests, Year 6 pupils' achievement was satisfactory. Standards were above average in science and reading, average in mathematics and below average in writing. Potentially higher attaining-pupils did not achieve as well as they might and did not meet their targets. Pupils with significant learning difficulties and disabilities who have specific statements of educational need are making better progress than other pupils.

Teaching is satisfactory with some good teaching, particularly in Years 2 and 6. Occasionally teaching is less than satisfactory. Pupils' personal development, attitudes and behaviour are good. A good curriculum is enriched well. Parents fully support the school. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory. Strong leadership by the headteacher has initiated better systems for tracking pupils' progress. However, the monitoring of teaching is not rigorous enough yet because subject leaders are still improving their skills in this aspect. The quality of provision and standards in the reception classes is sound overall and children reach broadly average standards by the end of the reception year.

The school has successfully addressed the issues in the last inspection and has a good capacity to improve further. The school was disappointed with the results in 2005 and new strategies have been introduced to improve teaching skills in writing and mathematics. These have begun to have an effect on raising achievement, particularly for higher attaining pupils.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Help teachers to use their assessment information better to provide more challenge for pupils in writing throughout the school and in mathematics in Years 3 to 6.
- Help subject leaders to hone their monitoring skills further so that the more rigorous monitoring of lessons produces consistently good teaching.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils achieve satisfactorily. Children enter school with a wide range of ability but overall their knowledge and skills are as expected for their age. They make sound progress and their levels of communication, language and literacy are marginally above those found nationally when they enter Year 1. In all other areas of learning children make steady progress and reach the goals expected for their age. Standards by the end of Year 2 are above those expected nationally and, by Year 6, are in line with national expectations. The quality of the school's provision remains unchanged and

this anomaly exists mainly because of high numbers of pupils in Years 3 to 6 who enter or leave the school at other than the usual starting and leaving times and the large number of pupils with learning difficulties.

Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 2 is above average in reading, well above in mathematics but in writing, broadly average. Achievement is good in reading and mathematics and satisfactory in writing. Although the Year 6 results in 2005 declined from previous years, they were still above average in science and reading and average in mathematics. However, pupils' achievement in writing was not good enough and potentially higher-attaining pupils failed to reach appropriate levels. Pupils with significant learning difficulties and disabilities made better progress than others, and pupils who entered the school during Years 3 to 6 made satisfactory progress. The school sets challenging targets but these were not met in writing or mathematics.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Good provision for pupils' personal development and well-being ensures that the attitudes of pupils and their behaviour are good. Punctuality and attendance are good because the pupils enjoy school and work hard. Pupils find lessons interesting and are keen to learn. They are unfailingly polite to visitors and staff, and friendly and caring towards one another. Bullying is rare, and pupils know incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. They are a delight to meet, and speak warmly of all the school offers them. Pupils say the school is a happy, friendly place and one commented, 'It's all so good I can't put it into words!' Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Cultural development is an aspect the school wants to improve more and it has arranged visits to places of worship and visitors from other faiths to ensure that pupils' knowledge and understanding widens. Pupils have considerable responsibilities and become school council members, 'playground buddies' and members of the 'job squad'. They make a good contribution to the wider community through charity work and taking part in local events. Pupils successfully develop an appropriate range of personal and academic skills that will help them later in life. Pupils eat nutritious food and take regular exercise. Their understanding of how to stay safe is well developed.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching is satisfactory overall and there is some good teaching and learning throughout the school, particularly in Years 2 and 6. Good relationships with pupils have been established. The teaching assistants play an important role and make an effective contribution to the pupils' learning. Occasionally, teaching and learning are inadequate because of an inappropriate choice of activity or because tasks are too challenging for some pupils.

Newly introduced teaching strategies and marking systems have begun to improve pupils' learning and confidence in their own ability, particularly in writing. Pupils know how to improve their work and can offer comments on the work of other pupils, such as, 'He hasn't met the learning objective'. In mathematics, however, marking is not always as helpful as it could be. In Years 5 and 6, extra teachers have been recruited to support smaller teaching groups. The bigger teams have also allowed teachers to ensure that improved planning is meeting the needs of all pupils. This is helping all pupils to make better progress and is making teamwork even more effective than it was already. The school's tracking procedures indicate that more pupils are likely to meet their targets.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides a good curriculum. French is an additional subject which pupils enjoy. The curriculum is enriched well by a good choice of clubs run after school as well as by a range of visits and visitors that contribute to the curriculum and extend the range of learning opportunities provided. In addition, the school organizes residential visits that are much appreciated by the pupils. This practice makes a first rate contribution to the pupils' personal and academic development.

Significant changes to the English and mathematics curriculum made in response to the recent test results are having a positive effect on pupils' progress and enjoyment. The school is in the process of developing the curriculum further in order to strengthen links between subjects.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides a good level of care and support with robust systems including child protection procedures, to ensure the pupils' safety. Key members of staff receive regular training. Pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities benefit from the care they receive as well as from the close partnership between home, school and outside agencies. The comprehensive programme for personal, social and health education is instrumental in encouraging pupils to lead safe, healthy lives and to develop a concern for their own and others' welfare. Parents strongly appreciate the way their children are looked after at school.

As a result of pupils not attaining the levels expected in the national tests, the school has developed better procedures to check on their progress and is now using the data collected more rigorously to improve standards. Pupils have developed a clearer understanding of what they need to do to meet their targets.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory with some good features. Self-evaluation is sound and largely accurate, and has enabled the leadership team to work very hard this year on the most important priorities for school improvement. As a result, the school has a good capacity to improve. The school regularly seeks parents' views and has acted upon their suggestions, for example, by improving communication. It also benefits from good links with other organizations related to aspects of learning, such as meeting the needs of gifted and talented pupils.

The leadership of the headteacher is good and provides a strong sense of purpose and direction linked to a much sharper focus on tracking the progress of pupils in their writing and mathematical skills. However, the amount of monitoring by subject leaders is limited as yet and the school recognizes that there is room for improvement. The management of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is good.

New strategies recently introduced to improve the teaching of writing, in particular, are beginning to have a positive effect on both teaching and learning but the consequences for achievement are not yet fully evident. Teachers are developing a better understanding of the progress pupils make and are also much more informed about how well the school is doing in comparison with similar schools nationally.

Governance is satisfactory with some good features. Governors are very supportive and fully aware of the school's agenda for improvement. They are actively seeking an award that will recognise their skills in financial management and are keen to widen what the school can offer to help working parents, such as 'Out of School Care'. Resources are good and used well to support learning. Additional teachers are now employed part-time so that smaller groups of pupils of a similar ability have better opportunities to make progress in lessons in English and mathematics.





## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for having us with you during our recent visit to your school. We hope we did not disrupt your work too much. We enjoyed meeting so many of you and joining you in lessons. This letter is to tell you about what we found out about your school. I have included some of the main points below.

- You told us how much you enjoy school and we agree. We noticed how well you behave and how polite you are.
- You enjoy your curriculum, which is good. You told us how much you enjoy the different residential visits organised by the school as well as the after school activities that you attend.
- We think the school council is taking a lot of responsibility and we like the way the school organises the voting just like a real election. One of you said you were nervous when you had to make a speech just like the Prime Minister.
- Your writing and mathematics are beginning to improve as a result of the new ways teachers are helping you. We have asked them to keep up this good work and make it even more challenging by making sure that some of you have harder work to do.
- We have asked the headteacher to help teachers look carefully at your work to see if you are making the progress you should.

Finally, may we wish you all the best for your time at Bracken Leas and thank you again for making us feel so welcome