

Braintcroft Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101532
Local Authority	Brent
Inspection number	286099
Inspection dates	21–22 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Jane Wotherspoon HMI

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	646
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr S Kothari
Headteacher	Miss D McNeill (Acting Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	19 November 2001
School address	Warren Road London NW2 7LL
Telephone number	020 8452 2413
Fax number	020 8208 2369

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is much larger than average for a primary school with more boys than girls. It serves an area of huge cultural diversity. Its pupils represent a wide range of ethnic groups and a high proportion speaks English as an additional language. A high number of pupils leave and join the school at different times of the year. The proportion eligible for free schools meals is higher than average as is the number of pupils with learning difficulties and /or disabilities.

The school has received several awards: Artsmark, Healthy School Award, and Active mark. It has had considerable support from local authority consultants to raise standards. The deputy headteacher is the acting headteacher for a term until a new headteacher takes up the post in January. There are five teaching vacancies filled by temporary staff.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005n, 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.

Braintcroft primary is not as effective as it should be. It is inadequate and does not provide value for money. Many of the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection in 2001 are still present. Since September 2007, the changes in the leadership team have enabled it to begin to put in place new systems to identify and rectify the underachievement of pupils. However, such systems are too new to have had time to make an impact on raising standards. Leadership and management are inadequate. The school's own view of its effectiveness as satisfactory is not accurate. It is not based on a secure and rigorous approach to self-evaluation that includes careful analysis of pupils' achievement over time. Systems for tracking pupils' progress have been upgraded very recently and this is giving the leadership team a clearer picture of which pupils are not making enough progress. It has become the basis for setting ambitious targets for each year group for the coming year and for targeting additional support to groups of pupils. Leaders are yet to implement a rigorous and robust cycle of monitoring and evaluation to ensure that actions identified in the school improvement plan are implemented and that there is a level of consistency in teaching that promotes pupils' good progress over time.

Standards are too low and have been so for several years. Despite support from the local authority to participate in programmes to raise standards, improvements have been modest. In Year 6 although the gap is narrowing very slowly, the results of national assessments in English, mathematics and science remain significantly below the national figures. Achievement is inadequate and too many pupils do not make the progress necessary to gain the basic academic skills they need to start secondary school. The gap between Braintcroft and national results in reading, writing and mathematics at Year 2 is widening as the proportion reaching expected levels for their age continues to decline. Pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics are weak. In part, this is because good foundations have not been laid in Nursery and Reception classes but also because the curriculum in Year 1 does not build on pupils' prior learning.

Monitoring by senior staff has identified inadequacies in teaching but action has not been taken and followed through with sufficient rigour to ensure improvements are made that enable pupils to make better progress. All classes contain pupils with a wide range of learning needs that some teachers have difficulty meeting. The main issue is the precision with which teachers use assessment information to adapt activities to meet pupils' needs, including those learning English as an additional language, and potentially more able pupils. Of course, some teachers do this successfully and the pupils in their classes make more rapid progress to begin catching up lost ground. The challenge for the school is to ensure that all teachers have sufficient, accurate information about their pupils as well as guidance on how to provide appropriately challenging work.

Pupils told inspectors they enjoy school, especially the sporting activities after school. Despite such positive comments, the punctuality of many pupils is poor although attendance rates are broadly average. The school does not have sufficiently rigorous systems to bring about improvement. Pupils' behaviour is good and most pupils enjoy good relationships with each

other and with the adults in the school. Pupils are confident that bullying is rare and dealt with effectively, although a small number of parents suggest that this is not the case. The vast majority of parents responding to the inspection questionnaire were positive about the school and its work. However, a small but significant minority are not happy about the standards their children achieve, and would welcome greater involvement in their children's learning.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 4

The provision in the Foundation Stage is inadequate. Children start school with skills, knowledge and understanding that is below that of typical three-year-olds, particularly their language skills. They settle to school routines and make satisfactory progress in their personal, social and emotional development. They gain independence in choosing activities and generally conform to adults' expectations during whole-group sessions. Adults provide a broad range of activities but the resources and environment are not stimulating. There is no systematic approach to monitoring what children choose to do and so there is potential for children to access an imbalanced range of experiences. The planning for focused activities led by adults is not rigorous enough and the quality of intervention is too variable. As a result, although adults manage activities satisfactorily they do not extend children's learning sufficiently. Observations of children's learning are not recorded regularly in the nursery class to provide a coherent picture of each child's development over time. The frequency of observations is better in the Reception classes but the quality is inconsistent and rarely identifies the next steps in learning to help adults plan appropriate activities. In addition, the balance between adult-led activities and those chosen by the children is not quite right in Reception classes so that children are left to their own devices too much. Occasionally, children are uncertain what to choose and they wander around. There is too little emphasis on developing children's language, literacy and mathematical skills through a range of activities, particularly in the outdoor areas. This affects how well children develop such skills and many begin Key Stage 1 with much ground to make up.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, initially in English and mathematics, by accelerating pupils' progress.
- Improve teachers' use of assessment information in planning to meet the learning needs of pupils, including those in the early stages of learning English.
- Improve the quality of the provision in the Foundation Stage ensuring that planned activities are based on regular and systematic observations of children's learning.
- Devise a rigorous approach to monitoring all aspects of the school's work and develop thorough systems, including analysing performance data, for evaluating the impact of provision on pupils' learning.
- Strengthen links with parents.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils' progress over time is too variable so that they do not reach the standards of which they are capable. The school has not met its statutory targets for several years. Pupils do not make enough progress year on year so are frequently trying to catch up in Year 6. Many have low starting points but are capable of achieving more. Evidence of accelerated progress during their final year, particularly in English, shows that pupils are capable of making better progress when

teachers support and challenge them appropriately. Pupils in the early stages of learning English do not get enough support in classes. Pupils with learning difficulties have well targeted and specialist support and make satisfactory progress. The school has identified that Somali pupils make less progress than other minority ethnic groups but, as yet, has not implemented effective strategies to address this underachievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' moral and social development are good. They behave well and have positive attitudes to their work. They enjoy their lessons, even more so when the teaching encourages them to talk and carry out practical activities. Pupils are developing their social skills successfully and they cooperate well with each other in lessons. They like their school and say that they feel safe. Most pupils feel free from bullying and say that any poor behaviour is dealt with effectively. They know they can go to an adult if they have any worries. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities such as lunchtime playground play leaders in Key Stage 2 and as 'buddies' for pupils new to the school. Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory as result of the emphasis that the teachers place on promoting consideration for others and giving pupils opportunities to think about the effect their actions have on others. Pupils develop a satisfactory understanding of cultures other than their own. They have a good understanding of the benefits of healthy eating and regular physical exercise because of the emphasis given to them in the school's curriculum.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Although teaching is inadequate overall, inspectors observed some good and outstanding lessons. Here, pupils were encouraged to investigate, discuss and solve problems for themselves and relationships between adults and pupils were good. However, in too many lessons teaching is not challenging enough to raise the level of pupils' achievements in line with their potential. Pupils are not helped to develop good spoken language and writing skills. Teachers' expectations are not always high enough and work set in lessons is often not appropriate for all the pupils. For example, lessons do not provide enough challenge for those who learn quickly and teachers do not expect pupils to give extended answers. Marking and assessment procedures do not always provide pupils with enough advice on how to improve their work. In many lessons the pace of learning is slow and teachers do too much of the talking themselves. Some teaching assistants demonstrate good practice but, overall, there is a lack of clarity about their role in providing effective support for pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The basic curriculum is broad and includes all subjects. However, it is not always well matched to the range of pupils' needs. Support provided for groups of pupils with learning difficulties is meeting their needs so that they make satisfactory progress. Continuity of learning experiences is not assured from Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1 because teachers do not take sufficient account of pupils' starting points when they join Year 1. Enrichment activities make a good contribution to pupils' enjoyment of school and, in particular, to their sporting achievements.

The school has begun to identify pupils who are gifted and talented but does not provide a programme of activities to extend these attributes; this area is underdeveloped.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Safeguarding procedures conform to requirements and appropriate procedures are in place for assessing risks to pupils' health and safety. Well established links with external agencies enable the school to support pupils with specific learning difficulties. The academic guidance given to pupils is inadequate. Monitoring of individual pupils' progress is not rigorous and teachers and managers do not consistently use information on pupils to target support for pupils in lessons. For example, support for pupils at the early stages of learning English is not sufficiently well planned. Pupils who arrive after the start of the school year are not inducted well into lessons and the school does not carry out an initial assessment of their English language levels. Their progress is not monitored closely enough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The acting headteacher and acting deputy are working hard with staff to identify pupils' underachievement. Strategies to address weaknesses are just starting to be put into place but it is very early days to see any impact. Management systems are not well established. Performance management of staff has not yet made an impact on improving teaching. However, staff morale is good and staff feel valued. There is a commitment to improvement.

To date, staff and governors have not been sufficiently involved in the school's self-evaluation processes. They have an unrealistic view of the quality of provision and, for example, underestimate the impact of weaknesses in teaching on pupils' progress and standards. Monitoring of teaching and learning is not systematic and rigorous and does not sufficiently identify support for teachers to improve their practice in the classroom. Governors, especially the chair, are supportive of the school but have not been well-informed of the school's progress in many aspects including achievement, the quality of provision, and finances. Some aspects of financial management have lacked accountability and rigour and have resulted in the school's deficit, which has been resolved recently through support from the local authority.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

3 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Braintcroft Primary School, London, NW2 7LL

The inspection team was delighted to meet you when we came to inspect your school. A special 'thank-you' to those of you who came to speak to us to tell us your views of the school. We think that the school could be doing more to help you make better progress. We have said the school needs 'Special Measures'. This means that your teachers will get extra help to make things better and that an inspector will come back to check up on the progress the school is making.

You told us you like school and especially the clubs after school. Despite this, we noticed that some of you arrive late and that makes for a disruptive start to the day. You told us that most pupils behave well and we agree. Most of you feel free from bullying and you know what to do if you have any worries. You get on well with each other and are generally considerate towards one another. You take responsibilities such as 'play leader' or 'buddy' to new pupils very seriously. We were pleased to see that you know about keeping healthy through regular exercise and healthy eating.

We have asked the staff and governors to help you make more progress in English and maths. We think that teachers need to make sure they plan things that are harder for some of you and easier for others. Some of you who are learning English need more support. We want staff in the Nursery and Reception classes to watch what children learn so that they can plan more things for them to do. We have also asked the acting headteacher to devise better systems to check up how well you are doing. Most of your parents are pleased with the school but some want to be more involved in school life and in helping you to learn. You can play your part, too, by making sure you attend regularly and arrive on time.

With best wishes

Jane Wotherspoon

Her Majesty's Inspector