

Brook Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103778
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	286753
Inspection dates	16–17 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Patricia Potheary

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 on roll	
School	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dana Newey
Headteacher	Lynn Cartwright
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2002
School address	George Street Wordsley Stourbridge DY8 5YN
Telephone number	01384 818835
Fax number	01384 818836

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Brook is an average sized primary school, with pupils from a mix of social backgrounds with above average levels of deprivation. Almost all pupils are of White British origin with very few from other ethnic groups. A small minority have a variety of learning difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Brook is a satisfactory school where pupils make steady gains in their learning and develop good personal and social skills. It is an exceptionally happy school, which pupils enjoy very much and as a result their behaviour is excellent. As one parent typically reported, 'Everyone is valued and made to feel important.' The standard of pupils' work is just below average when they enter and leave the school meaning that progress and achievement are satisfactory. In Reception achievement is satisfactory, although this is improving and there is some recent good progress in several areas of learning.

Good leadership and management have led to many improvements particularly in the last two years when underachievement has largely been eliminated and the school has become popular with parents. There are many good features of teaching and learning, although teaching is satisfactory overall because most pupils make sound rather than good progress over time. Good care, guidance and support ensure that pupils have individual targets at a level to suit their abilities, and those falling behind are given extra support. This has meant that standards in the school have risen from a low baseline and groups such as the more able, who were underachieving, are now making good progress. However, not enough pupils are making consistently good progress for progress to be good overall and this is largely owing to expectations not being pitched high enough for all pupils. This is recognised by the school, which sees setting more challenging targets as the next step towards further school improvement.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and they make an excellent contribution to their community, accepting plenty of responsibility in school such as helping to run the delightful community garden as well as substantial involvement in local and charitable events. The curriculum is good and very rich leading to the immense enthusiasm pupils demonstrate each and every day for the interesting things they do. The curriculum is beginning to support pupils' increasing understanding of how to keep healthy and, because the school provides good sporting opportunities, they take plenty of exercise. The all round skills pupils develop, especially being able to work well in teams, also ensure that pupils are well prepared for their future lives. Very strong links with other schools and organisations have, for example, led to extended provision, which includes breakfast and after school clubs from which pupils benefit greatly.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rate at which pupils make progress, by raising expectations of what they can achieve. A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are just below average throughout the school. Therefore, progress and achievement are satisfactory for all age groups, including Reception and for those with learning difficulties. Until recently there was significant underachievement for some age groups or in some subjects, but this varied from year to year. Careful target-setting now means that pupils' progress can be monitored regularly and any shortcomings addressed. This has proved to be effective and there are several instances of pupils making good progress recently, particularly the more able

pupils. Writing had been the weakest area but improved teaching strategies mean that pupils' writing is now at least satisfactory in all age groups. There are clear improvements in English, mathematics and science where more pupils every year are reaching or exceeding expected levels.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have very positive attitudes to school, typically describing it as 'brilliant'. Attendance is average but above the local trend as the school has robust responses to absence. Pupils' significant involvement in the work of the school has included a strong contribution to developing the fascinating school grounds and they demonstrate a keen sense of responsibility.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to behave towards others and they show respect towards the environment. They are supported well in developing a good knowledge of different cultures and faiths. Pupils say that incidents of bullying are rare, and are promptly dealt with.

Pupils develop a broad range of skills including good social and teamwork skills and strong self-belief to prepare them well for the future, even though their literacy and numeracy are satisfactory. Most pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and stay safe but school council members rightly identify that not enough pupils bring healthy break-time snacks.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There are many good elements to teaching and learning despite the fact that it is satisfactory overall. In all lessons, activities are interesting and pupils really enjoy what they do. Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) well to support understanding and work is planned well to help pupils make progress at a rate which suits them individually. Careful attention is paid to successfully encouraging pupils to work independently and in groups, thus developing good skills for the future. Teaching assistants are skilled in helping pupils understand what they must do to improve. The reason that pupils do not make more progress in lessons is because their individual targets and the work planned to meet them are often set at an average level of expectation. This puts a ceiling on what can be achieved over time and progress is satisfactory as a result. Good leadership has worked effectively to ensure that all teachers are now able to build learning systematically and more pupils are beginning to make good progress. For these pupils targets are more challenging so that they make faster progress in each lesson. One pupil reported, 'Phew, this work is hard, but I do like this school.'

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Planning reflects the latest guidelines and in particular is supporting the steady and improving progress in Reception, literacy and numeracy. A revised cycle of topics addresses the needs of the mixed-age classes, providing for more systematic development of pupils' knowledge and understanding and more even progress from year to year.

The curriculum is rich and an interesting range of sports, arts, drama and visits are very popular with pupils. In addition, a strong personal, social, health and citizenship programme results in

pupils developing good personal skills. This all means that pupils develop into well-rounded young people. The outdoor areas provide an excellent, well used resource to support pupils' learning, from Reception through to Year 6. The curriculum is not yet fully effective in helping enough pupils make healthy eating choices. Links with other organisations and the local community are strong and, with the extended provision, which includes the local library on site, make a significant contribution to pupils' personal and academic development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school has developed robust systems for safeguarding pupils. Parents and pupils are confident to approach staff for help. Pupils are well supported in their personal development. For example, strong links with other agencies support the school's work in meeting the needs of pupils who are vulnerable. Pupils are prepared well for transfer to their next school. Pupils with learning difficulties also receive regular support to help them make suitable progress.

The school has a well organised system for ensuring that every pupil has targets suited to their needs which pupils and teachers fully understand. Pupils' progress towards these targets is thoroughly monitored and effective support given to those falling behind. The resulting progress is satisfactory rather than good because too often the targets do not aim high enough and so limit the progress the majority of pupils are able to make. Recent developments, whereby teachers refer to specific targets in their comments when marking work, are helping pupils gain a better understanding of what they have to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

School leaders, including governors, have led a continuous drive for improvement from a time when standards were low and the progress pupils made was too frequently inadequate. At that stage the number of children on roll was falling and the building needed refurbishment. Since then a great deal has been achieved. A major success has been the rooting out of underachievement. The school environment is now delightful and the playground is truly outstanding. Community involvement and extended services are meeting the needs of the pupils and their families far more effectively and parents feel very positive about the school. The yearly increase in pupils reaching expected levels for their age and even exceeding them has been sustained. The capacity to improve is good.

Self-evaluation is satisfactory and, although the school understands its strengths and weaknesses well, recent actions taken have not yet led to progress and achievement being good overall. Nevertheless, improvements in pupils' writing skills and in progress for the more able pupils are significant achievements in the last twelve months. The school recognises that expectations and the targets set are not yet high enough for all pupils to make consistently good progress and now has all the right systems in place for raising standards further.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

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

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

18 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brook Primary School, Wordsley, DY8 5YN

Thank you for being so welcoming to us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you very much and seeing some of your lessons.

We found your school to be well run and very caring. It is a satisfactory school, but with many good things going on, just like you told us. It helps all of you to make at least expected progress in your lessons, and good progress in your social and personal skills. Your headteacher and senior staff do a good job in seeing that the school keeps improving. We would now like them to set more challenging goals for you to reach, to help you progress even faster. We are very impressed with how hard you work and with your excellent behaviour and think that you make an exceptional contribution to the school and community. Your beautiful playground is a fine achievement. Your teachers and teaching assistants are skilled at helping you to meet satisfactory targets, although we would like these to be extended.

We were pleased to see that you take plenty of exercise and are beginning to eat a healthy diet. Your teachers see to it that you have a good range of subjects and activities to keep you interested. The school supports and guides you well to keep safe and become well rounded people.

The way you care for one another is impressive and you clearly enjoy coming to school. We think that this, alongside your good skills working together, will stand you in good stead for your next school and future lives.

We wish you all the very best in the future.

Yours faithfully Lead inspector