



# Brickhill Lower School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 109503  
**Local Authority** BEDFORDSHIRE  
**Inspection number** 288402  
**Inspection dates** 22–23 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Keith Gilbert

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Dove Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Brickhill, Bedford
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9		Bedfordshire MK41 7AA
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01234 401404
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	288	<b>Fax number</b>	01234 401405
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Bernice Adeniyi-Jones
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Lynn Linsell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 July 2001		

<b>Age group</b> 4–9	<b>Inspection dates</b> 22–23 November 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 288402
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Pupils come from a wide area to this popular, larger than average sized lower school. Pupils start their education with levels of knowledge and skills which are generally above those nationally. Fewer pupils are entitled to claim free school meals than at other schools, but the number who have learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average. There are a greater proportion of pupils with English as an additional language than in most schools but almost all speak English well. The school has achieved its third Basic Skills Quality Mark and is a lead school for an assessment and learning project.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Brickhill Lower School is providing a good standard of education for its pupils. This judgement matches the evaluation made by the school. Pupils enjoy coming to school, knowing that the headteacher and staff care about their welfare, helping them to achieve their potential. Parents agree with this view and have an overwhelmingly positive image of the school's work. One parent wrote that, 'teachers are committed to the progress and well-being of the pupils'.

Children get a good start to their education in the Reception classes. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good with outstanding features. Throughout the school progress and achievement are good. At the end of Key Stage 1 and Year 4, results are significantly better than most schools nationally.

Leadership and management of the school are good. The recently appointed headteacher is supported well by the hard working leadership group, but, at present, monitoring and evaluation procedures, including those of subject coordinators, are under-developed. Areas for improvement have been identified and added to the development plan, and there is a good capacity for the school to improve. Governors are well involved and supportive. Good improvement has been made in their ability to challenge the school and hold to account and they are now better informed about the school's quality and standards. Finances are managed well and the school provides good value for money.

Pupils' personal development is good. They behave sensibly and are encouraged to develop into caring and considerate members of society. They relate well to each other so that there is a lot of fun and happiness in the playground. This makes for a positive learning environment so it is not surprising that attendance is very good. Pupils take responsibility and make a valuable contribution to life in the wider community. The school has responded well to the challenge of providing healthy food in the canteen and providing opportunities both during the school day and during extra activities for keeping fit.

Pupils are looked after well so that they feel safe and supported with systems in place to protect them. The school's work on assessment for learning and target setting has been valuable in helping the pupils to understand how they should make the necessary improvements to their work, although the quality of the marking varies in exercise books and folders. The quality of teaching is good with a range of satisfactory to outstanding lessons. Worksheets are used too frequently and the short-term planning does not always give opportunities for independent learning and problem solving. The curriculum, which is good across the school, is supported by a wide range of extra activities.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Develop further procedures for the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school.

- Improve further the quality of teaching by ensuring activities provide more opportunities for independent learning and problem solving.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils start the school, most having had some pre-school experience, with standards that are generally above average. In the Reception class they show this by the vocabulary they use, their ability to understand number and shape and to concentrate on their work. They achieve well in making progress towards the learning goals. They exceed those set nationally for children of this age. Progress is good in other years. This is because teaching builds upon earlier learning and the setting of challenging targets. By the end of Year 2, pupils reach standards that are significantly above the national average, just under half reaching the higher Level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics. Challenging targets set for pupils at the end of Year 4 were not reached in reading and writing. However, levels of attainment were at least above local authority levels. There is no major variation in the achievement of different groups, although girls marginally outperformed boys in end of Key Stage 1 tests. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils approach their education with great enthusiasm. Their attendance is above the national average and most come to school on time. Pupils behave well and they display mature attitudes about their work. They can discuss together, sensibly, how it could be improved. Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to life in the community and they regularly present concerts to family and friends. Pupils understand how they can live and work together effectively and help those in need by raising money for charities. Pupils show great potential in their roles as school councillors; their sports survey results are helping the Healthy School's re-designation work. They understand the need to stay safe and the value of adopting a healthy lifestyle, supported by the provision of fresh fruit at break time, and the healthy options for mid-day meals. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The daily assemblies are happy gatherings with a strong spiritual element and a respectful atmosphere. Cultural understanding is developed effectively through a good range of activities, including visits by dancers and storytellers. Multi-cultural opportunities are less well developed. The school rightly recognises that more need to be provided to support pupils' understanding of living in today's society.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

The majority of teaching seen during the inspection was good or outstanding. Relationships between teachers and pupils are positive. Work is mostly challenging; pupils enjoy their work and concentrate well when this is the case. Pupils respond with great enthusiasm and work together very well when they are asked to think independently, make choices and explore situations. It is not always clear from some lesson planning that teachers have thought enough about how long activities will take and whether they meet the needs of the range of abilities in the class. In some lessons, pupils lose concentration when introductions go on too long. More generally, the frequent use of worksheets restricts the occasions for extended writing. Teachers make good use of the new interactive whiteboards to make lessons enjoyable and interesting for the children. Computers are used appropriately in lessons to aid learning. Teaching assistants are well deployed to help children to learn effectively and make progress in small groups.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of all pupils effectively. Appropriate emphasis on literacy, numeracy and science is matched with rich and interesting approaches, such as drama, role-play and activities for daily living, which are used in other subjects. History focus days provide pupils with the opportunity to step back in time, in full costume, as Egyptians for instance. Art and craft work are also strengths, and pupils learn useful cooking skills thanks to parents' help. Personal, health, social and citizenship education is taught well and valued by the pupils. There is a wide range of opportunities for learning outside lessons, including a growing number of clubs, a school choir and visits to places of interest. French has been introduced to the curriculum and links with Italian teachers in training has broadened the pupils' understanding of European languages and customs. However, teachers have yet to make links between subjects in order to strengthen learning, for example, teaching literacy skills through subjects such as history, geography and religious education.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support for pupils. They make a good start in the Foundation Stage because of the careful induction arrangements. There are secure arrangements for child protection. Risk assessments are carried out thoroughly, but those with regard to the premises are not always recorded. There are clear policies on issues of health and safety and all necessary checks on teachers and other adults working in the school are undertaken. The school is aware that, at present, there are too few adults providing qualified first aid support. Plans are in hand to train

more staff. Targets are set for learning in literacy and numeracy and pupils know the steps they should take to reach their next goals. Thorough assessment procedures ensure that those pupils who have learning difficulties and other needs are quickly identified and tailored support programmes are put in place. An able team of teaching assistants, working closely with class teachers, and good partnerships with external agencies, ensures that these pupils progress well. Most parents feel that the school consults them and acts upon their views. Regular opportunities are provided for them to meet the staff and to receive newsletters and progress reports.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The school's leadership and management are good. The recently appointed headteacher has produced a sound and accurate school evaluation with areas for development outlined in an appropriate plan. She has a clear understanding of the future direction for the school. The headteacher receives good support from the experienced leadership team and all staff value being increasingly involved in decision making. Roles and responsibilities are clearly identified, although monitoring and evaluation is under-developed as is the role of the subject coordinator in this process. Hence, there is an inconsistency of practice, for example in marking, across the school. The governors have undertaken a range of recent training and are now better equipped to call the school to account and to act as a critical friend. They are now asking searching questions about progress and achievement and are much better informed. Finances are managed and targeted appropriately, including an under spend on last year's budget, and the impact of the spending is checked to ensure that the school achieves good value for money.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</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>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
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

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	2
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

24 November 2006

Dear Pupils

Brickhill Lower School, Dove Road, Brickhill, Bedford, Bedfordshire, MK41 7AA

Thank you for helping my colleagues and me to find out about your school. We enjoyed watching lessons and talking to you. It was interesting to talk to your teachers and watch one of your assemblies. You are lucky to go to such a good school.

Things about your school that are good include the following:

- you behave very well in school and on the playground
- you make good progress in English, mathematics and science by Year 2
- your headteacher has good and interesting ideas about ways to improve the school
- teachers and teaching assistants work hard and care for you well
- you are encouraged effectively to lead healthy and safe lives
- you enjoy school and attend regularly.

I have asked your headteacher to look at how she can make things even better. I hope that you will help teachers by listening to them carefully. The most important things are:

- to make sure that everyone knows what is happening in the classrooms so that really good things are shared with all the teachers and helpers and, where needed, improvements can be made
- to ask the teachers to plan activities which give you plenty of opportunities to work and learn independently and to give you more practice at solving problems.

Keep up the good work at Brickhill Lower School.

Yours sincerely

Keith Gilbert

Lead Inspector