



Brightlingsea Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114758
Local Authority ESSEX
Inspection number 290020
Inspection dates 27–28 February 2007
Reporting inspector Sarah McDermott

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Eastern Road
School category	Community		Brightlingsea, Colchester
Age range of pupils	7–11		Essex CO7 0HU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01206 303618
Number on roll (school)	371	Fax number	01206 304934
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Lesley Sycamore
		Headteacher	Mrs Claire Claydon
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
7–11	27–28 February 2007	290020

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by 3 Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average junior school. It serves a population from a range of social and economic backgrounds with average levels of disadvantage. Fewer pupils than average are eligible for free school meals. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is low. There are very few pupils with English as an additional language, none of whom are at early stages of learning English. Nearly all pupils transfer from the adjacent infant school. The standards of pupils on entry to the school are average.

The school has been awarded Healthy Schools status. It provides family learning and support services to the local community.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Brightlingsea Junior School is a satisfactory school that has improved standards since the last inspection. Current standards are in line with national expectations and achievement is satisfactory. Following disappointing results for last year's Year 6, the headteacher reacted quickly by signing up to the Increasing Success Programme (ISP). This is having a positive effect. However, the school is aware that the emphasis on improving writing in English and in other subjects is not as strong as it could be. The progress of the current Year 6, has now quickened and the pupils are moving satisfactorily towards their expected targets. The school believes its effectiveness is good because of this recent improvement, but current indications on achievement point to the school's effectiveness as satisfactory.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. The headteacher has worked successfully to improve behaviour and attendance since her arrival. Some boys in the upper school can still be over-boisterous out at play and parents still have concerns. In lessons pupils do as they are told, but as teaching is competent rather than exciting, pupils often do not have the chance to use their initiative and put a sparkle into their learning. This has a detrimental effect on the progress of the more able. Pupils lead safe lives, but do not do enough physical exercise. Activities are satisfactorily matched to the needs of the pupils. Sorting pupils into ability sets means they are able to achieve satisfactorily in English and mathematics. Pastoral care is strong, and academic guidance of pupils is satisfactory with teachers confident in matching work to pupils' needs.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school is aware of its strengths and weaknesses, but subject leaders are not yet sufficiently accountable for standards. The school works well with the neighbouring infant school for a smooth transition between Year 2 and Year 3. Despite the provision of family learning classes and a special parents' room, communication with parents is an issue. Consequently, shared promotion of learning between school and home is not as effective as it could be. The school gives satisfactory value for money and has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in English (particularly writing), mathematics and science.
- Improve the overall quality of teaching from satisfactory to good.
- Extend the role of the subject leaders so that they are all accountable for standards in their subjects.
- Improve relationships and communications with parents.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils at the end of Year 6 have attained average standards over the past three years. Standards have improved since the last inspection. English and science consistently mirror national trends, although there has been more of a fluctuation from year to year in mathematics. Boys do not do as well as girls in English, as reflected in national statistics. Of particular concern are standards in writing which are lower than national expectations. The vast majority of pupils arrive in Year 3 with standards which are in line with national averages. They make satisfactory progress and leave in Year 6 with nationally expected standards in the three core subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities achieve similarly to others.

In 2006 pupils did not achieve as well as they should have done in their Year 6 tests. These particular pupils did a little better than other year groups in their Year 2 tests, but did not keep up this momentum during their time in the junior school. They suffered from the lengthy absence of one of their teachers and from the aftermath of previous disruptive behaviour. They did not reach their predicted targets. Since becoming part of the ISP this academic year, the school is now more in control of standards and achievement. Current Year 6 pupils are on track to meet their targets for the end of year tests, which demonstrates satisfactory progress towards standards that are in line with the national average. However, the school is aware that their goal for higher levels in writing is demanding and is unlikely to be achieved.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory but pupils do not have a sufficiently wide experience of other cultures through lessons or displays. Attendance has improved and is now satisfactory. Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that if they have any worries adults will deal with them. However, at playtimes, because supervision is not as tight as it should be, pupils do not always use the playground areas safely. Occasional bullying takes place, mainly amongst the older pupils, but pupils report that it is dealt with effectively by staff. Although parents have concerns, behaviour has improved recently and now is satisfactory.

Pupils respond positively when given the chance to work in pairs and groups or participate actively in projects such as the jungle art event. One pupil exclaimed: 'I am really enjoying this!' However, at times the tendency is for pupils to wait to be told what needs to be done rather taking the initiative themselves.

Pupils understand how to follow a healthy lifestyle but do not practise this. Despite the school being identified as a 'Healthy School', some pupils still do not choose to eat vegetables, salad or fruit at lunchtime. Additionally, pupils do not yet have opportunities to take at least two hours of physical activity per week. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community. Membership of the school council gives pupils an understanding of the democratic process of representing their

class's views. Year 6 pupils are proud of their 'buddy' responsibilities with the younger pupils and enjoy looking after the school livestock. Pupils develop adequate social skills and reach satisfactory standards in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) to help them in the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There is too much satisfactory teaching at present to enable pupils to make better than satisfactory progress, although there is evidence that the quality of teaching is improving. In literacy and numeracy lessons, teachers adhere closely to the national format. Many of these lessons are mundane and lack excitement. However, this is changing with improvements to classroom organisation and lesson content. In some lessons, teachers are now more confident in linking subjects, such as ICT and English, to enliven learning.

Teachers' lesson planning is thorough and assessment is being used more fruitfully to raise achievement. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to help the less able achieve. Marking is of mixed quality. Some teachers offer advice to pupils on improvement but others simply offers compliments. Work is underway to improve this. Pupils are being encouraged to evaluate their own work, particularly in literacy, but there is scope for this to be extended to other subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Recent changes to planning to improve subject links are enabling teachers to better meet learners' needs and interests. There is an appropriate range of subjects taught, but staff are aware that there is not enough time given to physical education. Other elements of healthy, safe and community-aware lifestyles are promoted satisfactorily. Although activities in lessons often do not stretch the most able pupils, there is good identification and additional provision for gifted and talented pupils.

Teachers work well as teams, with help from local advisors, to ensure literacy and numeracy lessons are meeting pupils' needs through ability sets. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities have appropriate opportunities for support outside the classroom. Visiting artists provide exciting variation to the normal timetable. In the inspection week, Year 4 and 5 pupils put much lively effort into creating their rainforest creatures. There is a good range and variety of clubs for all age groups with a positive take-up of places, but there is no residential journey to build on pupils' social skills and offer wider experiences. Improvements in accommodation mean that pupils can learn in appropriate surroundings, but the hall is too small for the whole school to meet for assemblies, lunchtimes or concerts.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides satisfactory guidance and support for its pupils. Pastoral care is good and vulnerable pupils are appropriately cared for so that they achieve as well as their classmates. As one parent commented, 'The support my son gets from the special needs team is very good and he looks forward to coming to school.' Pupils report that they feel well looked after and that behaviour has improved. Despite parents' misgivings, the school takes a firm line in ensuring acceptable standards of behaviour in lessons and makes good use of outside agencies such as the behaviour support team. However, boys can be over boisterous at break times and despite the high number of adults on duty at playtime, supervision is not good enough. Outings are carefully assessed for likely hazards, but assessment of risks in the school grounds is not sufficiently robust. Safeguarding procedures meet government requirements for checking the suitability of adults working with pupils

Academic guidance is satisfactory. Since the implementation of the ISP, work is better matched to individual need and pupils are aware of their targets in English and mathematics. The introduction of targets is helping pupils take more charge of their own learning. However, not all teachers are moving pupils on to the next target quickly enough. This is particularly so for the more able pupils who could progress at a faster rate.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has a renewed focus on raising standards and is not reticent in taking tough decisions if necessary. Quite rightly she tackled low attendance, unsatisfactory behaviour and problems with the accommodation as her first priorities on arrival. However, this meant a significant amount of time and effort was spent away from the fundamental educational focus of raising standards. The senior management team were disappointed with the low achievement in 2006. However, the headteacher reacted very quickly to this identifying that the school would benefit positively from participation in the ISP.

The ISP is giving subject leaders a good introduction to tighter monitoring and evaluation of the pupils' learning. Subject leaders are clear about strengths and weaknesses and have a strong commitment to improvement, but are not all yet fully accountable for standards in their subjects. They do not have sufficient chance to observe how pupils are learning or to analyse subject data themselves. Governors are very committed to the school and knowledgeable of the school's place in the local area, but are not all sufficiently challenging the school to do better in its standards and achievement. A small minority of parents do not agree with the way the school is led and managed. However, as the inspection team judge that this is satisfactory, the senior leaders and governors have work to do in improving relations with the parent

group. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory and resources are used efficiently and effectively.

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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	4
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	3

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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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	3
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	3
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

1st March 2007

Dear Pupils

Brightlingsea Junior School, Eastern Road, Brightlingsea, Essex CO7 0HU

Thank you for making us welcome in your school. We enjoyed meeting you and were pleased that you were happy to share your ideas and views about the school with us. This letter is to tell you what we think of your school and how it can be even better.

Most of you like coming to school and your attendance has improved. Behaviour is better than it was a couple of years ago, but there are still some older boys who misbehave. You really enjoy activities such as the jungle art project, but in normal everyday lessons too many of you do not make enough effort to put up your hands and offer answers. We think that lessons are now better at helping you to make progress because the work is usually just hard enough, but it could be harder for brighter pupils. Also teachers could make your lessons more exciting and encourage you to improve your writing. We believe you know what you should do to be healthy and safe, but we were disappointed to see not enough of you eating vegetables at lunchtime. We also know you do not have enough regular PE each week. Your jobs around the school, such as looking after the younger pupils and caring for the rabbits and guinea pigs, are really helping you to be sensible and community minded.

To make your school better we have asked your teachers and governors to do four things:

- Help you to get better results in your tests, particularly in writing
- Make all teaching good so you can make good progress in your learning
- Make sure that teachers who lead subjects are clear how you are doing so they can show other teachers what to do to improve your learning
- Work more closely with your parents so you are helped equally well with learning from home and school

We enjoyed our visit to your school. I am sure all your teachers will put your care and education first. You can do your bit by making the most of your time at Brightlingsea Junior School.

Mrs McDermott

Additional Inspector