



Brookside Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131956
Local Authority Cheshire
Inspection number 293902
Inspection dates 13–14 November 2006
Reporting inspector Anna Dawson

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

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|---|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Type of school | Primary | School address | Rostherne Avenue |
| School category | Community | | Great Sutton, Ellesmere Port |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 | | Cheshire CH66 2EE |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 0151 3392052 |
| Number on roll (school) | 205 | Fax number | 0151 3481726 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Mr Paul Newman |
| | | Headteacher | Mr Gareth Powell |
| Date of previous school inspection | 5 February 2001 | | |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small school serves the local area, which has some economic and social deprivation. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is higher than average. An above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are a small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups, mainly from White European backgrounds, several of whom are at an early stage of learning English. The school has attained the Activemark Gold, Artsmark Silver status and the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

Since the last inspection there have been changes to the leadership, many staff changes and much staff absence. An experienced headteacher took up the interim post of acting headteacher in March 2006 for one year until a permanent headteacher is appointed.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation of its performance that this is an improving school providing a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. Parents appreciate the care and support given to their children and recognise the 'immense improvements' made by the acting headteacher in recent months. There are good partnerships with other schools and outside agencies. The improvement from the last inspection is satisfactory and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

Provision and standards in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Children start in the Nursery with below average skills. They make steady progress and by the time they leave Reception most are working securely within the expected learning goals for this age. However, the transition into Year 1 is not sufficiently well planned to provide the practical and stimulating investigative activities that the children need, particularly early in the school year. Progress continues to be satisfactory to Year 6, where standards are average in English, below average in mathematics and well below average in science. Staff changes and absences since the last inspection have hindered pupils' progress: hence there are some gaps in pupils' ability to solve problems in mathematics and in their investigative skills in science. Currently the staffing is stable and standards are beginning to rise in English and mathematics because of the intensive support for these subjects provided by the local authority advisers. In science, where there has been no leadership or intensive support, standards have remained below average although the school has plans in place for improvement.

Teachers' marking encourages pupils, inspires confidence and tells them clearly how to improve. Pupils enjoy learning and are stepping up to the challenges presented to them. Good systems are in place to assess their progress. However, in the Foundation Stage, the assessments made by the staff tend to be over generous and do not reflect an accurate picture of the children's attainments.

Although teaching is satisfactory a sign of improvement can be found in the growing understanding pupils show that they have to work hard to achieve. The positive example set by the acting headteacher and the staff underpins the good quality care, guidance and support that the pupils receive. The curriculum is satisfactory and has strengths in developing pupils' personal and social skills, skills in art and in the provision of out of school activities. Pupils' personal development is good. There are lots of opportunities for pupils to participate in sports, for example, which contribute to their physical education and their good awareness of keeping healthy. Attendance is improving but still below average for a small minority.

The acting headteacher provides excellent leadership. His positive management brings out the best in both staff and children. Leadership and management is judged satisfactory overall, however, because the outcomes of the work of the subject leaders and senior management are not yet evident in higher standards. The quality of school self evaluation is good and the process is shared with staff, governors, parents and pupils. The governors are supportive of the school and know the main strengths and

weaknesses. However, not all of them are aware of their roles and responsibilities in holding the school to account.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics and science at Key Stage 2.
- Improve the accuracy and quality of assessing how well children are doing in the Foundation Stage and improve the transition from the Reception class into Year 1.
- Improve governors' knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children's attainments when they enter the Nursery are below average in their social, communication, language and mathematical skills. Very few children have skills that are above those expected for their age. By the end of Reception most have made satisfactory progress and are working securely within the expected learning goals. The children get a satisfactory start in Year 1. However, there are too few opportunities for exploratory play and practical activities, which limits their achievement. In year 2, progress accelerates and children achieve well to attain broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Writing standards have improved from 2005 when they were below average. In Years 3–6 pupils' generally make satisfactory progress in English, mathematics and science. In Year 6 good progress is made in English and standards are broadly average. In mathematics, standards are below average, particularly in pupils' problem-solving skills. English and mathematics have both benefited from intensive support. Consequently, standards are improving as more pupils than previously are reaching higher levels than in 2005. Achievement in science is the weakest. The subject has lacked leadership and has not been the focus of intensive support within the last year. Standards have slipped to well below average. Examples of high quality work in art were seen during the inspection and there is a strength in the development of pupils' personal and social skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils enjoy learning. Their personal development is good. They say that they feel safe, that they trust adults in school and feel well cared for. This is because the positive relationships between the children and staff nurture pupils' self-esteem. The pupils are confident and not fearful. These qualities help them to work well with their classmates and behave well. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is promoted well through positive messages, plenty of visits and visitors, art and residential experiences that trigger for example, poetic writing and much reflection. The school council enables the children's voice to be heard democratically. Councillors speak proudly of the charity fundraising they have undertaken, the recycling venture, and of the everyday jobs such as being a 'buddy'

to others in school. The children become responsible individuals who are well aware of how food and exercise contribute to staying healthy. They are equipped well with good social skills and take care of one another. They have adequate basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics for future learning. Their attendance is improving and is satisfactory overall but remains below average for a small minority. The school's effective approaches and the work of the learning mentor are making a positive difference.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Successful teaching is underpinned by clear expectations of work and behaviour and by good relationships. There are a good variety of activities that capture children's interests to meet their challenging targets. Consequently, there is a positive learning atmosphere and pupils behave well. Although the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, there are aspects of good teaching across the school, which contribute to raising standards. For instance, teachers question pupils skilfully to assess their understanding and prompt them to extend their thinking. There are good assessment systems in place that are used well by the staff to track pupils' progress, plan work and set the challenging targets. They mark their work thoroughly, leaving them in no doubt about what they need to do to improve. However, there are some weaknesses. Not all teachers explain clearly enough what they want pupils to learn. Teaching assistants give satisfactory help so that small groups of pupils catch up on missed learning in English and mathematics. They give additional help to those who are new to learning English, helping to accelerate their progress. In some lessons, pupils are passive learners and do not have enough time to investigate or practise their learning because teachers talk for too long. In Key Stage 2, teachers' knowledge and understanding of science is weak.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with some strengths. Good personal, social and health education helps the children to become well aware of the choices open to them in the future and of how to keep safe and be healthy. Lots of opportunities for sports and art, some newly established themed days and the provision to learn Spanish are some of the interesting activities that enrich learning. The good range of out of school activities and residential experiences foster new skills and the children's interests and talents. The provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT is satisfactory and the children gain sufficient skills. However, there are missed opportunities to develop these further in other subjects. Too few opportunities are planned to help the children to investigate and make connections between ideas in science, which contributes to their underachievement. Provision in the Foundation Stage and as children transfer into Year 1 is satisfactory but there are too few opportunities for practical activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school is vigilant in its care for the children and provides good guidance and support, particularly for those who are facing difficulties. It is resourceful in its help for those who are learning to speak English as an additional language, for example in the provision of dual language books and resources. The requirements for the safety and protection of children are in place, including those for risk assessment. New family learning links help to support the children and their families and make lessons a topic of conversation. There is competent support provided for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at this stage in the school's development and these children have a renewed understanding of the role they can play in reaching their targets. The academic guidance for children's progress is generally effective and helps them to understand clearly what they are learning and how they might improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school has been through a turbulent period since the last inspection and has lacked strong leadership and suffered many staff changes and staff absences. This has hampered school development and limited pupils' progress. Whilst much has been done the outcomes are not yet fully reflected in higher standards and achievement. Following an audit with local authority advisers in 2005 intensive support was provided designed to accelerate pupils' progress and raise standards in English and mathematics. Since the appointment of an interim acting headteacher in March 2006 there is evidence that this programme has had far more impact. His outstanding leadership and rigorous management has been the catalyst for the emerging teamwork and positive commitment of staff to improve pupils' achievement. The reorganisation of roles and better professional development have empowered the staff to successfully take on their leadership and management responsibilities. As a result areas for improvement have been identified and targets set. Hard work has gone into developing the school's assessment systems. Consequently, staff are able to track pupils' progress, quickly spot underachievement and put strategies into place to ensure pupils work to their potential. To this end resources and staff are well deployed to meet the pupils' needs. As a result standards are beginning to improve in English and mathematics. The views of parents, pupils, staff and governors contribute towards decision-making and good quality school self-evaluation. Governors are well informed and understand the main school priorities. A minority are involved and supportive of school initiatives. However, the majority of governors tend to be over reliant on the headteacher's information to understand how well pupils are doing. They are not all aware of their roles and responsibilities in holding the school to account. The school has satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

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Inspection judgements

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| 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

| | |
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| 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 | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| 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

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|---|---|
| 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 | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| 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 | 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? | 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.

Leadership and management

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| 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 | 2 |
| 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

We thoroughly enjoyed our recent visit to your school and would like to thank you for the warm welcome you gave us. It was good to see so many of you enjoying school. I would like to share with you some of the main things we found out during our visit:

- your headteacher, Mr Powell, is doing an excellent job
- we agree with you that you behave well and you get on well with each other
- the staff work well together to help you improve in mathematics and English
- your teachers take good care of you.

The headteacher and staff have already spotted some of things that need to be done to make your school even better. Here are the things we have asked the school to do:

- help those of you in Years 3 to 6 to improve your skills in solving problems in mathematics and carry out more investigations in science
- provide more interesting and practical activities to help you learn when you move into Year 1
- we have asked the governors to get to know more about their roles and responsibilities.

We would like you to keep improving your work and send you our good wishes for the future.