

Brookside Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102289
Local Authority	Havering
Inspection number	307960
Inspection date	16 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Nick Butt

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	231
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms J Martin
Headteacher	Mrs J Puttick
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2005
School address	Dagnam Park Drive Harold Hill Romford RM3 9DJ
Telephone number	01708 343066
Fax number	01708 343932

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. He evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: what the school is doing to improve the performance of boys; the involvement of pupils in their own learning; the impact of year group coordinators on standards and achievement. The inspector gathered evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and parents' questionnaires. Discussions with staff, a governor and pupils also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This average-sized school with a Nursery is situated in an area of mainly local authority housing. Almost 90% of pupils are of white British origin, and the remainder come from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. A small number of pupils speak an additional language to English. Almost a third of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is high. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average. These include speech and language, and moderate learning difficulties. The school has awards for promoting basic skills, inclusion and healthy lifestyles, for its provision of physical education and for the way it develops its staff. It also has an award for its extended day.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has some outstanding features to its work. A parent said, 'My son is over the moon with his new school,' reflecting the vast majority's high regard for the education and care their children receive. Pupils achieve well from starting points that are well below expectations on entry to the Nursery. Boys, in particular, come in with very low skills in speech and language. Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 2, although boys do not do as well as girls, especially in writing. The school has worked hard to raise the attainment of boys and has adapted its outstanding curriculum to appeal to them. It is too early to see the full impact of these efforts to stimulate the interest of boys in test results. However, it is clear all pupils love coming to school and have excellent attitudes to learning. Teaching and learning are good, as teachers manage and engage pupils well through well-structured, thought-provoking lessons which involve them in their own learning. A parent noted, 'There is an exceptional community feel to the school,' praising its family atmosphere. All pupils are valued immensely and treated as special individuals, which gives them the confidence to overcome any difficulties and thrive in a caring and supportive environment.

The headteacher's outstanding leadership inspires pupils, staff and parents alike, reaching out into the local community. Parents welcome the wide range of courses and services the school offers for families as well as children. They see the work the pupils are doing during the school day when they take part in learning walks with their children. A strong emphasis on academic rigour ensures staff have high expectations of pupils and that planning focuses on improving learning. Leadership and management are good. Senior leaders monitor and evaluate the school's work closely, and form an accurate view of its performance. They have successfully improved questioning techniques as a result of their observations. Strategic plans reflect their good understanding of strengths and areas to develop, but do not consistently explain clearly enough what improvement will look like. For example, action plans to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning do not mention better test results as a desired outcome. Governors support the school well and ask searching questions, but do not have formal structures for reporting the findings of any monitoring they do.

Pupils' personal development and well-being, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Their behaviour is excellent, and they respect one another's feelings. A parent commented, 'My child has learnt a lot of key values such as sharing and kindness to others'. The school council takes its role responsibly. One councillor said, 'People come to you with ideas about what they want in the playground'. He added that a swimming pool was 'not sensible' as the playground was too small! Pupils are highly involved in their local community, going to the church for a Christmas service, and give a daily weather forecast on the local radio station. They raise money for local charities. Many parents said how much their children enjoy school. Attendance is typical for an infant school and there are very good procedures in place to promote it, including calls home on the first day of absence and rewards for coming in every day. Pupils have an exceptionally good understanding of how to live healthy lives and take plenty of exercise. They feel safe at school and say there is an adult they would turn to if they had a problem. The outstanding curriculum adds considerably to their enjoyment of school with subjects linked together in exciting ways. For example, pupils developed their speaking and listening skills as one described a painting for the others to draw blind. There are plenty of trips to places such as a farm and a local museum. The school gives pupils confidence, a love of learning and standards in basic skills that equip them well for junior school.

The school is an attractive place with colourful displays of children's work. Teachers ask open-ended questions that make pupils think, and use resources well to support learning. There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills to overcome the speech and language difficulties many face when they first start school. The school provides additional support where these persist and enables pupils to be fully included in lessons. Teaching assistants help pupils with moderate learning difficulties well, and work closely with the teachers in planning suitable activities for them. While most lessons proceed at a brisk pace, occasionally too much time is spent questioning the whole class, and pupils' progress slows. Teachers make good use of technology to link subjects together, and use topic work to extend pupils' writing. A pupil said, 'I like writing everything the teacher tells me to do'. In one class, pupils wrote a brochure for a garden centre as part of their research into plants.

There is outstanding care, guidance and support for all pupils, with valuable contributions from the learning mentor and home-school support worker. Pupils are greeted cheerily as they arrive at school and any little issues are sorted out immediately. All safeguarding procedures are in place. Staff know the pupils very well and act swiftly to help them with any problems. There are strong links with other agencies who offer guidance and support, and links with parents are strong. A parent said, 'I really enjoy the events they run to keep me involved in my child's school life'. These include special breakfasts, coffee mornings and regular drop-ins. Teachers, parents and pupils meet together each term to discuss progress and agree new targets. Pupils all have targets linked to their level of attainment on the National Curriculum and know what they have to do to improve. Marking clearly shows them the next steps in their learning.

The year group coordinators have had a positive impact on teaching and learning, ensuring that there is a consistent approach to the curriculum, and checking work and planning. The headteacher is supported very well by the deputy. They monitor lessons and give staff helpful feedback about strengths and areas to improve. There have been improvements to the building in recent years, but there is still not enough storage space, resulting in part of the hall having to be used for resources. This is not ideal when the hall is also used for physical education and dinners. The grounds have been well designed to support learning, and include a paved plan of the local area, which pupils use to develop their geography skills. The school has a good capacity to improve further thanks to the dedication and commitment of all its staff, and the consistent and successful way they implement policies and procedures that promote pupils' learning.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children settle quickly into the Nursery and get off to a good start, enjoying the variety of interesting and exciting activities. There is a good mix of adult led and child initiated experiences. The key worker system ensures that every child can go to an adult who has a special interest in their welfare. The excellent Foundation Stage curriculum develops children's early literacy and numeracy skills well through a thematic approach. Children enjoyed watching caterpillars turn into butterflies, and this generated lots of discussion and some good writing. The Foundation Stage is led and managed well by a coordinator, who offers valuable guidance and support. Staff make good assessments of children's progress and enable them to achieve well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise boys' attainment in writing by capturing their imaginations further in the tasks set.

- Show the intended impact of action plans through identifying consistently specific and measurable outcomes.

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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

27 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brookside Infant School, Romford, RM3 9DJ

Thank you very much for making me so welcome at your school. I did enjoy my visit. Yours is a good school with particular strengths, and here are some of the things I like about it.

- You make good progress in your work.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you look after one another very well.
- You know all about keeping healthy and staying safe.
- The teachers make sure there are lots of exciting and fun things for you to do.
- You go on many interesting trips.
- The school cares for you extremely well and helps you if you have a problem.
- The headteacher makes sure the school runs smoothly and keeps everybody happy.

Some of the boys find writing more difficult and I have asked the school to do all it can to help you so that you can catch up the girls. I am sure your teachers would like to know what you enjoy writing about. Staff have a good idea how well the school is doing and what needs to be done next. I have asked them to show clearly how they expect the school to get better once they have made improvements.

Thank you once again for your help. My best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. N. Butt

Lead Inspector