

# Brays School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103618
<b>Local Authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	308365
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 March 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joyce Cox

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	76
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Gary Prince
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jane Edgerton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 November 2002
<b>School address</b>	Brays Road Sheldon Birmingham B26 1NS
<b>Telephone number</b>	01217 435730
<b>Fax number</b>	01217 421567

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<b>Age group</b>	2-11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Brays is set in the heart of multicultural Birmingham. Many of the children live in challenging home circumstances and over half come from communities where English is an additional language in the home. All of the pupils have exceptionally severe and complex needs, which arise from their physical, medical and learning difficulties. Some pupils have life limiting conditions and child mortality is a feature of the school which can be very distressing for children, parents and staff. Some pupils have complex undiagnosed conditions. Many learners also have visual and hearing impairment and a small number of pupils exhibit behavioural difficulties as a result of their medical conditions.

Brays is a Communication Assessment Centre for Birmingham, which is facilitated on site by speech and language therapists. It is a member of the Creative Partnerships Project run by the Arts Council and has worked with other local schools on exciting projects involving dancers, musicians, writers and artists.

The school has secured many awards for its work including a Healthy Schools award, a leading aspects award for its outreach work, Artsmark Gold award, an extended schools award, local authority governor award, a Birmingham litter award, a catering hospitality assured award and the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This outstanding and inspirational school succeeds in creating a safe but challenging environment and community, which provides high quality education, therapy and care. Pupils are nurtured and valued, their achievements are celebrated and they are enabled to communicate, move and learn as effectively as possible. A significant strength is the group of talented, specialist staff who work at the school. Teachers, teaching assistants, catering staff, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists and nurses and other visiting professionals provide excellent support so that pupils really enjoy their learning and achieve exceptionally well. Pupils experience regular success in learning how to move and communicate from an early age, which gives them the confidence to want to succeed in other areas of learning. They very quickly develop extremely positive attitudes to work, to the staff and to each other. Their behaviour is excellent and they are sensitively encouraged to become as independent as possible. Consequently, they willingly undertake duties around the school. The school is very bright and cheerful and classrooms are often filled with smiles and laughter as pupils take pride in their achievements and strive successfully to do their very best. A beaming smile from a pupil who recognised the opening guitar chords of his favourite song was noted and celebrated by staff and pupils. Pupils' personal development is excellent. They learn about the importance of eating sensibly and, through individualised mobility plans, are encouraged to be as active as they possibly can. They say they love coming to school, relationships are excellent and they trust the adults. Attendance is excellent.

Foundation Stage children receive sensitive and high quality support so that they have an excellent start in developing their social, physical and communication skills. Pupils' achievement is outstanding across the whole school because of the excellent care and education package it offers. Although standards are extremely low because of the extent of learners' physical, medical and communication difficulties, the progress they all make is excellent. This is because teaching is of such a high quality and the excellent curriculum is skilfully adapted to suit individual needs. The excellent teaching is stimulating and interesting and staff have very high expectations of their pupils. Learners make especially fast progress in developing communication skills using signs and symbols and pictures very effectively. The care, guidance and support given to pupils are excellent. Every effort is made to ensure that communication is as effective as possible so that the needs and wishes of individuals do not go unrecognised. Intimate care is given in a manner that preserves the dignity of those receiving it. The school keeps excellent records of pupils' achievements.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher is exceptionally clear about the direction the school should take and together with the deputy headteacher works tirelessly to bring about improvements. The school has excellent working relationships with other local schools and agencies, which impacts very positively on curriculum developments and pupils' achievement. For instance, a significant number of pupils attend local mainstream schools for part of the week. Brays' award winning Outreach Service supports 800 pupils in central and east Birmingham. The leadership team have correctly identified that there is not enough information for parents about how they can support their child's learning at home. There has been excellent improvement since the last inspection. Governance is very supportive and governors evaluate the school's work effectively. The leadership of the school is ambitious and highly successful and outstandingly placed to bring about further improvement.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 1

When children start, their skills are well below expected levels because of the severity of their learning difficulties, disabilities and medical needs. Many have experienced long periods of understimulation or extended hospitalisation. Every child has specific learning and physical mobility targets designed skilfully to combat earlier understimulation. Staff plan children's individual learning exceptionally well through exciting and inviting activities. Children make excellent progress especially in their personal, social and communication skills. Their excellent behavioural development is aided by the outstanding one-to-one attention they receive. The quality of care and nurture from the staff is second to none, so that children feel happy, settled and safe. Colourful and exciting resources, such as tactile, noisy toys, encourage children to join in, whatever their level of difficulty. The high quality of the provision is a testament to the excellent leadership and management. Parents feel their children have a 'wonderful' start and one parent comments, 'We were told our child would never talk and to our delight his speech is coming on. Fantastic!'

### What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the links with parents by ensuring they play a full part in supporting pupils' achievement.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 1

As pupils move through the school they make excellent progress against their individual starting points and suitably challenging targets. Pupils attain well above pupils with similar complex difficulties elsewhere. This is because the staff are passionately determined to ensure that pupils learn as much as they possibly can. In spite of their profound difficulties many pupils begin to develop early literacy skills. For one child, progress can be indicating choice through eye or hand movement, for another, more able pupil, it may be learning to read and write short sentences. Pupils' outstanding progress, particularly in communication skills and social interaction, results from an emphasis on helping them to communicate in their preferred way. The school also places great emphasis on developing pupils' physical mobility. With careful support and encouragement some learn to take weight on their legs for the first time, or to walk with increased coordination.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Pupils show great delight and enjoyment for all aspects of school life. They say they love swimming in the pool, their friends and signed singing. Attendance is excellent, particularly when considering the impact of some pupils' severe medical needs. Pupils like getting praise and rewards, work hard and behave exceptionally well. Staff are highly successful in creating an atmosphere of trust, where the pupils are not confused or anxious and are able to cope with the challenges of learning new things or trying new types of food. Small portions of food are provided every day for all pupils to taste and select from. Consequently, pupils eat healthy foods, although some have restricted diets or are tube fed. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They are very involved in school life both off and on site through involvement in the school council and local community projects, such as growing food

on their allotment. Some pupils enjoy spending part of their school week in local mainstream nurseries and schools, which broadens their educational experiences. All pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Excellent teamwork and relationships are seen in all classes. The highly experienced and competent staff skilfully use a wide range of approaches to engage and stimulate all pupils. Consequently, pupils make substantial gains in their learning and personal development, and also in their independence and social skills. Specialist support from nurses, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists and excellent guidance from the Exceptional Needs Leader and other visiting professionals ensure that pupils with complex physical, visual, auditory and sensory needs experience high calibre teaching. Throughout the school staff successfully use signing, pictures, objects of reference, communication aids and electronic devices to ensure that all pupils contribute to lessons in their preferred manner. Excellent assessment information is used very effectively to plan the next steps in pupils' learning.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

Staff provide a vibrant stimulating and accessible curriculum which is matched to pupils' specific needs. An exciting range of opportunities promote a sense of fun and enjoyment in coming to school. Pupils study a broad range of subjects at their own level and excellent emphasis is placed on developing their skills in communication, socialising and independence. Personal, social and health education is taught in discrete sessions and through the whole curriculum. A strong emphasis on promoting pupils' physical development and mobility includes beneficial links with the local sports partnership. The installation of a multisensory environment in the school hydrotherapy pool adds considerable enjoyment and enrichment to pupils' regular swimming sessions. Regular opportunities for pupils to learn in the wider community include joining classes at local mainstream schools. Excellent use is made of talented musicians and artists to engage pupils and to provide exciting sensory and exploratory activities using the school's innovative creative curriculum.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

High staffing levels ensure that pupils are well supervised at all times. Rigorous procedures minimise risks to pupils, for example when going out on visits or when being moved into standing support frames. Individual care and medical plans are drawn up and routinely monitored by the school's nurses. Many pupils have high levels of dependency and require physical lifting or tube feeding. Such procedures are carried out with respect for each pupil's dignity. Staff are well trained to meet their responsibilities. All child protection and safe recruitment procedures are securely in place. Pupils 'pleased to meet you' passports attached to their wheelchairs convey essential information to staff, parents and visitors regarding their communication, visual and auditory skills, and their likes, dislikes, and dietary needs. The deputy headteacher has developed excellent assessment systems to track pupils' progress.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

The headteacher provides outstanding vision and strategic direction for the school. She works closely with the deputy headteacher to promote high standards of education and care and they both enjoy considerable respect and support from the staff, governors and parents. The staff say they feel able to contribute their ideas and to try new ways of working knowing that they will be well supported. Literacy and numeracy subject leaders provide excellent guidance to all staff and have skilfully adapted the new Primary Framework to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. A particular strength is the promotion of equality of opportunity for every pupil regardless of need or disability. This outward looking school works in successful partnership with others for the benefit of its pupils. The head teacher has brought rigor to self-evaluation and monitoring so that all staff have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and a clear plan of action for addressing its priorities for improvement. She empowers and supports all staff to take ownership of their work so that they fulfil their own personal and professional aspirations. The governors provide excellent support to the school.

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## 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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

### 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	1
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	1

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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

<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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

- It was a real treat for me to visit your school and I am writing to thank you for two very happy days. It was great to see your smiling faces, to talk to the council and I really enjoyed your singing and signing in the hall before you went home on Wednesday. I agree with all your parents that you go to an excellent school. These are the things I liked best.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you are keen and eager to learn new things.
- You are all doing well in lessons, and in moving and choosing.
- You enjoy the delicious school meals and eating healthily and you are brilliant at helping the adults to run the school.
- Teachers and teaching assistants make learning exceptionally interesting and fun for you.
- You have an excellent curriculum and enjoy swimming and some of you say you like football.
- Anyone who needs help with work, eating and moving is always given it.
- The teachers and staff take excellent care of you while you are in school.
- Your headteacher and deputy headteacher are excellent leaders. The headteacher, staff and governors have lots of good ideas to make the school even better. I agree with their ideas. I also think it would be good if staff help your mums and dads to help you to learn at home as well as at school. I am really glad you enjoy your school and thank you for all the very happy memories.

I wish you all the very best for the future.



6 March 2008

Dear Children

**Inspection of Brays School, Birmingham, B26 1NS**

It was a real treat for me to visit your school and I am writing to thank you for two very happy days. It was great to see your smiling faces, to talk to the council and I really enjoyed your singing and signing in the hall before you went home on Wednesday. I agree with all your parents that you go to an excellent school.

These are the things I liked best.

- Your behaviour is excellent and you are keen and eager to learn new things.
- You are all doing well in lessons, and in moving and choosing.
- You enjoy the delicious school meals and eating healthily and you are brilliant at helping the adults to run the school.
- Teachers and teaching assistants make learning exceptionally interesting and fun for you.
- You have an excellent curriculum and enjoy swimming and some of you say you like football.
- Anyone who needs help with work, eating and moving is always given it.
- The teachers and staff take excellent care of you while you are in school.
- Your headteacher and deputy headteacher are excellent leaders.

The headteacher, staff and governors have lots of good ideas to make the school even better. I agree with their ideas. I also think it would be good if staff help your mums and dads to help you to learn at home as well as at school.

I am really glad you enjoy your school and thank you for all the very happy memories.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Joyce Cox  
Lead inspector