

Brookmead School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110518
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	310344
Inspection date	2 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Sean O'Toole

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	267
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr K Rogers
Headteacher	Mr R Thomson
Date of previous school inspection	22 April 2002
School address	High Street Ivinghoe Leighton Buzzard LU7 9EX
Telephone number	01296 668543
Fax number	01296 661004

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated how well pupils make progress and whether standards are high enough. The consistency of teaching was evaluated and the inspector focused on how well pupils develop good attitudes and behaviour. Evidence was gathered from the analysis of pupils' results, scrutiny of samples of their work, observation of lessons, parents' questionnaires, and discussions with the headteacher, senior management team, governors, parents and pupils. 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 is a popular and oversubscribed school which draws pupils from a wide area. Almost all pupils have White British backgrounds and very few are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Staff, governors and parents appreciate that the school's mission statement, 'Learning, Living, Growing, Giving', lies at the heart of its work. The school successfully places an emphasis on pupils' enjoyment and achieves a good balance between academic achievement and the development of pupils' personal and social qualities. As a result, behaviour and attitudes are outstanding. Pupils contribute excellently to the school's happy and purposeful ethos where all feel secure and well cared for. Each day they put tremendous effort into keeping fit through their dance routines in 'Wake and Shake'. They have excellent awareness of the needs of others and keenly support charities. The school is very much part of the village and pupils are proud of their involvement in the community and knowledgeable about wider environment issues.

The vast majority of parents speak highly of the school's work, praising the commitment of staff, the wide range of activities and the quality of teaching. The inspector found that the school works hard to inform and involve parents but a few have concerns about how the school communicates with them about their children's progress and would like to be more involved in decision-making. Parents feel that their children make good progress and achieve well, and this is backed by inspection evidence. Pupils of all abilities work hard, respond enthusiastically in lessons and are successful in national tests. Although there was a slight dip in standards in 2007, most pupils are working at above average levels in English and mathematics. They are especially successful in reading and writing because teachers provide very good guidance on how to write effectively and include helpful comments when they mark the pupils' work. Parents are very supportive in listening to their children read. Pupils say how much they enjoy their schoolwork. They faithfully complete the regular homework and enjoy research, particularly when using computers to very good effect. Teachers and their assistants are skilled in planning and preparing interesting and challenging lessons. However, some of the work in geography, history and religious education is not always as demanding as that set for English and does not always include sufficient opportunities for the pupils to extend their writing skills.

Much of the school's success is due to the good leadership and management of a well focused and supportive team and the perceptive involvement of the governors. All adults concerned with the school are ambitious for the pupils' success and set challenging targets. High quality guidance for pupils ensures that they know their own targets and what they need to do to improve. Staff work hard to identify strengths and weaknesses in performance by analysing data and using the information to plan strategically. There is a good track record of improvement since the previous inspection and the school is well placed to build on its success. Discussions with parents and pupils provided convincing evidence that this is a caring school in which every child matters. There is excellent support for those who find difficulty with some aspects of learning. Work with individuals and small groups is well focused and helps the pupils to grow in confidence academically and socially. One boy said, 'The teachers are really kind, they explain what I need to do and help me when I am stuck.'

The school's curriculum and extra activities contribute much to the pupils' enjoyment and achievement. Regular trips, the residential visit and lessons and assemblies enhance pupils' learning. These opportunities also help pupils to develop an understanding of other cultures and traditions and help them to appreciate their role in society. One girl, commenting on what she thought was best about the school, said, 'The teachers have taught me that everybody is important and special.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start in the Foundation Stage and quickly settle into the friendly and purposeful environment. They are busy workers who clearly enjoy the opportunities provided and benefit from good teaching and interesting activities. Teachers and other staff work well together and their strong emphasis on developing the children's basic skills prepares them well for Year 1. Children rapidly improve their communication and mathematical skills. They enjoy the daily exercise routines and sing along happily with rhymes and songs as they practise a variety of movements. These sessions are particularly good in helping the children to grasp the initial sounds of new words. Close links between the classes and the support of experienced assistants contribute well to learning. Staff keep well focused records of the children's progress and use the information to plan the next steps in learning. Sometimes the work is a little too formal and the children miss out on creative activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make greater use of history, geography and religious education as opportunities for pupils to explore their ideas and extend their skills in writing.
- Provide more creative opportunities for children in the Foundation Stage to enrich their learning.

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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	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

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?	2
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	1
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

15 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brookmead School, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 9EX

Thank you for making my day at your school so interesting. I really enjoyed spending time in your classes and having the time to talk to the school council and other groups. It was great to see how well you play together and I was impressed with the organisation of the 'Huff and Puff' activities. Lots of you told me how much you enjoy coming to school.

One of the most important things I noticed was how well you behave. You are very polite and kind to each other and visitors and help to make the school a happy place. I enjoyed the singing in assembly, was pleased to see how much you took pride in achieving your awards and thought how generous you were in raising funds for charity. I know that your parents and the teachers are very proud of you for your hard work and excellent behaviour.

You go to a good school and do lots of things well.

- You are successful in tests because you work hard and try your best.
- You are really good at using computers.
- You show lots of respect for others and are thoughtful and kind.
- Your teachers work hard to plan interesting lessons and try to make sure that everyone gets the help they need.

Even in good schools there are always things to do and I have asked the teachers to find ways to help you to write in more detail in your work in history, geography and religious education. I have also asked them to give the children in the Foundation Stage more opportunities to do creative activities. You can help your school to get even better by continuing to do your best.

I know that you really enjoy Brookmead and hope that you will always be as happy at school.

Best wishes

Sean O'Toole

Lead inspector