

Brierley Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111061
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	310491
Inspection dates	14–15 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Geoff Lawrence

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	123
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Elizabeth Everson
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Booth
Date of previous school inspection	9 February 2004
School address	Mirion Street Crewe Cheshire CW1 2AZ
Telephone number	01270 581527
Fax number	0

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. Pupil numbers have almost halved since the last inspection. It serves an area of mainly local authority housing and many families have low income. The percentage of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is higher than the national average as is the number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The school has recently admitted a significant number of pupils from Eastern Europe with little or no English language. The current headteacher was appointed in Sept 2007 following a period in which the governors were unable to fill the vacancy in the long term and the school had a succession of permanent and temporary appointments. The school holds the Activemark Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This satisfactory school is beginning to improve its educational provision. Staff ensure that all pupils are well cared for and as a result, pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons and out-of-school activities. This is reflected in their above average attendance, positive attitudes and excellent behaviour. It is also a view shared by parents, who are overwhelmingly supportive of school. Typical comments included, 'school is a very positive experience' and, 'it is a happy environment for the children'. Pupils have a good knowledge of how to stay safe and a satisfactory understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle.

The senior leadership team is instrumental to the improvements the school is making. The headteacher's motivational and decisive leadership empowers staff at all levels and has greatly improved morale and teamwork.

Although standards have been low for a long period, pupils are now achieving satisfactorily. The school has turned a corner and there is clear evidence of improvement. There remains some variation in the progress made by different year groups because the quality of teaching, although satisfactory overall, is variable. Pupils are beginning to make better progress in most classes but standards have some way to go. Staff training and changes to classroom practice are already making a visible difference.

The curriculum is satisfactory but has strengths in promoting pupils personal development and the integration of Spanish throughout the school. There are early signs that changes within the curriculum to address the need to raise standards in reading, writing and science are having an impact. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in Key Stage 1 receive good support from the 'nurture group' and this has contributed significantly to recent improvements in their reading.

The leadership has recognised that subject leadership, although enthusiastic, is underdeveloped. At this middle level of leadership, there is not yet a good understanding of the links between information from assessments and performance data and what is needed to be taught to raise standards. This limits the ability for all to contribute to school improvement, for example, by comparing this school's performance to others nationally. Some individual leaders, however, are well informed and knowledgeable and have a good overview of their areas, which enables them to strengthen provision and improve standards. The governing body, also under new leadership, provides good support and is carrying out its role as a 'critical friend' increasingly effectively.

The school's current assessment of its performance is accurate. The speed with which changes have taken place with plans of action firmly focused on tackling raising standards and achievement, gives the school a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Satisfactory provision in the Foundation Stage enables children to make a solid start to their education. They mostly enter Nursery with skills and knowledge below those expected for their age in all areas and well below in their language and emotional development. Good personal, social and emotional provision, in which the nurture group plays a key role, helps children to develop positive attitudes and settle quickly. Children enjoy school and behave well. The rate

of progress in some areas of learning is variable because not enough opportunities are given for independent learning to take place. This is because the outdoor curriculum is underdeveloped and many of the activities are too adult directed.

The headteacher has taken on the leadership of the Foundation Stage and is providing good leadership in this area. She has identified areas for development and has already begun to make changes to address the need for curricular change and improved outdoor provision.

By the end of the Foundation Stage, children's standards remain below those expected for their age except in personal development, which are in line with national expectations and this represents good progress in this area but satisfactory achievement overall.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and achievement.
- Develop the role of subject leaders so that they have a greater understanding of performance data and so are better able to raise standards and achievement, particularly in English and science.
- Ensure teachers make effective use of information from assessments in order to improve the impact and consistency of teaching and learning throughout the school.
- Develop the outdoor curriculum in the Foundation Stage and opportunities for children to learn independently.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards in Key Stage 1 are below national levels in reading and writing and have been for four of the last five years. Standards in mathematics in 2007 were in line with national averages. Current work and school data are showing an improvement in reading standards because of new strategies introduced.

The number of pupils taking Key Stage 2 tests in 2007 was significantly lower than in previous years and this group contained a high number of pupils with learning difficulties. This resulted in the overall standards achieved being below average. Standards achieved by pupils without learning difficulties were in line with national averages. Progress made by this year group was satisfactory and an improvement on previous years. There are early signs that recent changes to the way in which pupils with learning difficulties are supported have begun to accelerate learning. This is because their learning needs are targeted well.

Pupils' outcomes are beginning to reflect the standards of which they are capable and all year groups are making at least satisfactory progress. Standards in the current Year 6 are average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' social and moral skills are well developed. Pupils have a good awareness of other cultures because of the successful integration of pupils from other countries. The pupils take their responsibilities seriously. Their roles as buddies, play leaders and school council representatives, enable them to contribute usefully to the school community. Pupils are extremely friendly and

polite. Their excellent behaviour and good attitudes help them to work and play well together. They say they feel safe in school and bullying is rare. They talk openly about the confidence and trust they have in the adults in the school. They are also involved in contributing to a variety of local and national charities. The contributions of the learning mentors and the nurture group are significant factors contributing to pupils' good emotional development and improved attendance. Pupils' preparation for their future economic well-being is satisfactory reflecting standards achieved in basic skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Variation in the quality of teaching across the year groups explains the unequal progress being made. Teachers plan and prepare their lessons carefully but some are not using information about how well pupils are doing effectively enough, to set work that has an appropriate level of challenge. Consequently, the pace of learning slows and some pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Conversely, in the better lessons teachers accurately assess pupils' progress and guide learning well. This motivates pupils and helps them to make better progress. Classroom assistants provide a good level of support in helping those pupils who need extra assistance.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language are well supported in class so they are involved in all activities and make satisfactory progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with an appropriate emphasis placed on basic skills in English and science to address the previously low standards. The school has made good progress in introducing a foreign language and Spanish is firmly embedded within the curriculum. The school has started to link subjects across the curriculum but it is at an early stage of development and too early for the impact of this to be felt. There are increasing opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology, for example; a Key Stage 2 class researched Native American stories on the Internet to support their work in literacy. Pupils' learning is enriched by a range of visits and many pupils enjoy taking part in a good range of extra-curricular activities, such as art and craft. There is good provision for physical education and this links well to the strong focus on personal and social development, which prepares pupils well for adult life.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The work of the learning mentor and nurture group has been instrumental in helping pupils with emotional and behavioural problems to achieve. The support has extended to families. Parents comments have included, 'they have been very supportive and caring towards me and my son', and, 'they give my daughter fantastic support'. The school makes every effort to provide for pupils who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language.

Pupils' knowledge of their targets or what they need to do to improve their work is inconsistent. Teachers' marking of pupils' work rarely shows them how to improve. In a few classes, pupils

are starting to be involved in the assessment of their work, but this is at a very early stage and has yet to impact on achievement. Policies on child protection are in place and the school meets the latest government requirements on safeguarding children, including those who are more vulnerable. Procedures for health and safety are secure.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Lack of stability in the leadership over recent years has resulted in there being an insufficient focus on pupils' academic progress. The focus is now firmly fixed on raising standards and achievement. Through intensive monitoring and analysis, the headteacher has gained an accurate view the school's performance and made changes that are already beginning to have a positive effect. This work has also helped sharpen procedures for self-evaluation. As a result, the school is quickly identifying its strengths and areas for development and acting promptly. For example, a greater emphasis on teaching letter sounds has improved reading at Key Stage 1. New systems have been put into place to monitor how well pupils are doing. This information is being used to help raise standards and monitor teachers' performance. It is too soon, however, to measure the full impact.

Subject leaders are keen to develop their areas and are being given the necessary training. They welcome the extra responsibilities they are being given and are eager to help the school move forward. Governors appreciate the importance of achievement and standards and are learning to hold the school to account more in this area.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	3
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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
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	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

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

Thank you for making me welcome during the recent inspection. I really enjoyed talking to you and seeing you work. I was impressed by your excellent behaviour and must tell you that you are the friendliest group of children I have met. It was so nice that everyone knew my name and spoke to me. It made me feel extremely welcome. I enjoyed my meeting with the school council and finding out about the things you liked in school. Yours is a satisfactory school and these are some of the things that I judged to be strengths in your school:

- Adults in school make sure that you are safe, well cared for and happy when you come to school. You attend school very regularly.
- You get on well together and with your teachers.
- There are interesting things for you to do including after-school clubs.
- You understand the importance of taking lots of exercise.

There are many other good things about your school, but there are some things it could do to make it even better, and you can help by working hard. I have asked your teachers to help all of you to learn more and reach higher standards in your work. I have also asked them to try to make sure that all the teaching in your school is as good as the best that I saw. I would like them to use all the information the school has about you to keep a better track of how well you are doing. This will enable teachers to plan work for you that will help you to get good results. I have also asked your school to improve learning outside for the children in Reception.

Thank you once again for helping me. I enjoyed my time with you and your teachers. I hope you that you continue to work hard and enjoy school.