

Brookfields School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111516
Local Authority	Halton
Inspection number	310614
Inspection dates	31 October –1 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Arif Hussain

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	79
6th form	10
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Chris Holleran
Headteacher	Mr A Chryssafi
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Moorfield Road Widnes Cheshire WA8 3JA
Telephone number	0151 4244329
Fax number	0151 4953460

Age group	2-19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Around half of the pupils at Brookfields have autistic spectrum disorders and a quarter have severe learning difficulties. A small proportion have severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. Some pupils also have significant behavioural difficulties. The number of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders is growing. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. A good number are entitled to free school meals. The school has National Autistic Society accreditation status for specialism in teaching pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. The school also has the Basic Skills Quality Mark (primary and secondary), Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Mark, Artsmark (silver), Healthy Schools Award (Post Accreditation) and Investors in People status.

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 school is particularly effective. Representative views from parents include, 'Excellence is the word to describe the school's performance' and 'I wouldn't let the wind blow on my little boy but I couldn't wish for a more caring school, it's like a home from home.' Though standards are low owing to the severity of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achievement is outstanding. Achievement is excellent across the school because the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Teachers have the ability to put themselves into pupils' shoes and this helps them to plan lessons that successfully appeal to pupils' preferred learning styles. The vast majority of pupils of school leaving age successfully complete many external accreditations. Accreditation includes areas such as communication, social, literacy, numeracy and (ICT) skills.

The school's success is underpinned by particularly effective relationships with parents and the wider community. The school works very effectively with the local authority regarding school development and inclusion. Links with mainstream schools are firmly established through the school's highly regarded outreach services which enable others to access the wealth of knowledge and expertise the school has, particularly regarding autistic spectrum disorders.

Personal development is exceptional because pupils receive outstanding care, support and guidance from highly dedicated and skilled staff. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is equally striking. Pupils blossom into very mature and considerate young citizens. The school has developed an imaginative and exciting curriculum that enables all pupils to flourish and achieve as well as they can. Pupils love school and this is reflected in excellent attendance and enthusiasm in lessons. They adopt healthy lifestyles particularly well through the Healthy Schools initiative and there is a very high level of participation in activities such as hydrotherapy, swimming and lunchtime basketball. Pupils feel safe and free from any hindrance and say that there is no bullying. Supervision is excellent and any challenging behaviour is managed exceptionally well. Pupils' contribution to the community is outstanding. The school council's input to recent staff recruitment was excellent and their observations about healthy eating options in school have led to significant changes. Pupils' self-confidence and pride in undertaking responsibilities such as those of register monitor or events manager are quite astounding. Judging by the skills pupils develop in communication, literacy, numeracy, ICT and enterprise, they are particularly well prepared for the future.

Leadership and management are outstanding at all levels. The headteacher's inspirational vision on inclusion has spread across the school community and his enthusiasm to develop excellence is shared by all staff. The governing body is very supportive and has successfully pushed the development of target-setting systems for pupils across the school. Self-evaluation at all levels is accurate, penetrating and insightful. Any underperformance is identified quickly through rigorous monitoring and is very effectively addressed. The school was judged as very effective at the last inspection. It has maintained all areas of its very good work while making key improvements to the Foundation Stage and sixth form. This demonstrates excellent capacity for improvement. In view of the exceptional outcomes, the school provides outstanding value for money.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are particularly effective. Provision is excellent and the curriculum provides high levels of challenge for students of all abilities. The sixth form leader has improved teaching and learning by implementing very high standards of planning and by promoting high levels of students' involvement in lessons. Achievement is outstanding. Students gain many accreditations by the time they leave, including in areas such as independent living and advocacy as well as many modules in numeracy. Personal development is excellent. Self-confidence and respect for others are most noticeable.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Excellent provision ensures that children make the best possible start to school life. Children settle into learning routines very quickly because of the very positive learning ethos and excellent staff support. Children make very good progress in most areas of learning, including communication, personal and social development. They thoroughly enjoy their time at school and are well aware of the needs of others in their class. Staff ensure that children are very effectively engaged in learning. For instance, in a lesson about weather, children's faces lit up as they felt a fine, misty spray of water droplets against their faces, hardly able to contain their excitement at the sensation. Good improvements have taken place since the last inspection, for instance to the accommodation and the breadth of the curriculum. These developments are the result of outstanding leadership and management.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no significant areas for development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Parental comments include, 'Brookfields is a fabulous school. My son has made real progress and learnt so much.' All pupils make equally impressive progress, regardless of their learning difficulties or ethnicity. For instance, those with the most complex difficulties move forward in very small steps but their achievements are just as outstanding as those of pupils with severe learning difficulties. Communication and language development is always a strong focus in learning and so pupils make exceptional progress in this area. The spoken word is accompanied by signing or, more usually, the use of symbols, pictures and aids that enable pupils to understand and be understood. Every opportunity is taken to promote a love of books and this has resulted in very good progress in reading. Pupils gain accreditations from Year 8 upwards. In the last school year, the great majority left with many accreditations in different modules, meeting challenging targets. The modules included basic sight vocabulary, early writing and using a digital camera. Several of the older pupils attend college courses each Friday and make very good progress in acquiring vocational skills in areas including floristry, hairdressing, ICT and construction skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Pupils' remarkable personal development makes an excellent contribution to learning. Pupils mature into very well rounded and thoughtful young people as a result of excellent personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE). Pupils respond exceptionally well to the school's high expectations regarding attendance, attitudes and achievement. Parents confirm that their children are managed especially well and that behaviour is excellent. Pupils learn to come to terms with their learning difficulties and find their place in the world. They value others and are naturally polite, well mannered and caring. Pupils have a very good appreciation of diversity and know that this brings richness to life and society through their work on different cultures. The school has embraced the Government's Every Child Matters agenda to the full. For instance, enjoyment is outstanding and achievement is as good as it can be.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Excellent features of teaching include the emphasis on developing communication and basic skills, effective use of sensory learning resources, presentation that captures and sustains pupils' interest and a brisk pace in lessons. Consequently, pupils are engaged very well in learning and achieve especially well. Teaching assistants make an outstanding contribution to the success of lessons through very skilful support that takes account of individual learning needs. A typical example of outstanding teaching was seen in literacy where older pupils learnt particularly well about the special features of poetry. All pupils were given work that matched their abilities and challenged them to the full. They could hardly wait to start because of the stimulating introduction and there was attentive silence as they worked towards their personal learning targets. Assessment and marking of work are outstanding. The information collected is very well used to modify teaching to meet individual needs and set pupils' learning targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. Excellent provision for literacy and numeracy helps all pupils to gain basic skills and to prepare especially well for the future. There are many chances to learn about personal care, independence, money, further education and jobs. An enterprise week is held regularly and helps to develop pupils' skills, for instance in running the tuck shop. Pupils enjoy hydrotherapy, swimming and many sports, making a significant contribution to their physical development. The rich variety of extra-curricular activities includes poetry, drama, art and dance. Creativity in learning is very effectively promoted through music. For instance, the school employs a music therapist who is often involved in lessons such as creative arts. The accommodation is very well used to provide additional learning chances. For instance, pupils enjoy working in the sensory garden and adventure park. Visits out of school include visits to galleries, theatres and museums and help pupils to be so successful in their learning and personal

development. The curriculum is further enhanced by links with the local authority. For instance, a specialist ICT consultant regularly works on projects with many pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Representative views from parents include, 'I have seen huge changes in my children and have nothing but praise for the staff. They genuinely care about our children and that is of paramount importance to parents.' Arrangements to ensure child protection, health and safety are securely in place and regularly reviewed. High levels of staff training in lifting, moving and personal care ensure that the dignity of pupils is always protected. Academic guidance is outstanding. Teaching and support staff go the extra mile in lessons to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can. Excellent links in the community include medical practitioners, therapists and advisory groups and these are very effective in promoting the well-being of pupils. Pupils respond especially well to incentives and rewards for good behaviour and achievement. Celebration assemblies are frequently held and are very effective in raising pupils' self-belief and aspirations.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The leadership of the school is successfully focused on achievement and promoting the personal development and well-being of all pupils. There is a common sense of purpose across the school. Excellent monitoring and evaluation of performance enables the school to develop particularly effective strategies to support learning. Target-setting systems for pupils are very rigorous and successful. Self-evaluation is particularly acute and almost every inspection judgement exactly matches that of the school. Inclusion is at the heart of the school's work. For instance, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are very well integrated with others in the classroom. The school deservedly has an excellent reputation in the community. Parents are very appreciative of the school's work. Courses in areas such as communication, family literacy and behaviour management are helpful in promoting parents' involvement in their children's learning. Resources such as electronic whiteboards and the sensory room are used very effectively to support learning. Prudent deployment of staff, for instance in the Foundation Stage and sixth form, has resulted in marked improvements to the quality of provision since the last inspection.

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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	16-19
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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	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	1	1
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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

Inspection of Brookfields School, Widnes, WA8 3JA

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed meeting you and you were all very helpful. This letter is to tell you some of the things I found out about Brookfields School.

You told me how happy you are at school. This is because the teachers and other adults make sure you are safe and provide lots of exciting things for you to do. You know what you need to do in order to be healthy and safe. Your behaviour is excellent and you are extremely good citizens. I was very impressed with the work of the school council and the way they help everyone. Well done!

You have excellent teachers and this is why you all learn such a lot. This helps to make sure you are ready to leave school when the time comes. The oldest pupils and students gain lots of certificates for their work.

The headteacher, staff and governors all work very hard indeed to make sure you all keep learning so quickly. Your parents and carers think Brookfields is a brilliant school and I agree with them. It is outstanding!

I send my very best wishes to each one of you.