

Brimington Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112517
Local Authority	DERBYSHIRE LA
Inspection number	310910
Inspection dates	20–21 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Keith Edwards

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	299
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Les Harris
Headteacher	Mr Phil Hickey
Date of previous school inspection	29 October 2001
School address	Springvale Road Brimington Chesterfield Derbyshire S43 1HF
Telephone number	01246 232505
Fax number	01246 232505

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large junior school serves the former mining community of Brimington. Numbers have fallen since the previous inspection. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and all come from homes where English is the first language. Attainment on entry to the school meets national expectations although there is a wide range of ability in each class. The proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal is average. Although the proportion with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average, the proportion with a statement of special educational need is above average.

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 with outstanding features. It has made good progress since the previous inspection and is well set to maintain the momentum. All the key issues raised in the previous inspection report have been resolved, the quality of teaching is much improved and standards are rising. The pupils are very proud of their school and are keen participants in the exciting range of opportunities that the school provides. There is an outstanding level of care to ensure that pupils feel safe and secure. As one parent commented, 'Brimington Junior School is a really lovely, caring primary school'. The school is at the heart of the community that it serves and works well with other schools.

Standards by Year 6 are above average in English, mathematics, science and sport. Because the pupils now have a much clearer idea of what they need to do to improve, and their attitudes to learning are so positive, their achievement is good. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Pupils who find learning difficult make good progress because they are very well supported, both by the teachers and a team of dedicated teaching assistants. The higher attaining pupils are challenged to reach their potential through work that is carefully matched to their ability. Furthermore, the curriculum encourages all of the pupils to be active learners rather than passive recipients of information. Not all pupils do as well as they could in writing. This is because many lack fluency in their handwriting and lack confidence in using a broad range of vocabulary.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers and support staff work very effectively together. The adults know each pupil by name and are excellent role models. This promotes good quality relationships and ensures that pupils benefit from a very orderly learning environment. Teachers plan work carefully to ensure that the necessary skills are taught systematically and effectively. The curriculum is innovative and motivates pupils to do their best. The ethos and the exciting range of opportunities available to pupils, strongly supports their personal development and keeps them interested.

The personal development and well-being of all pupils is exemplary. Attendance rates are improving because the school has been resolute in its drive to eliminate unauthorised absence. Staff respect and value all pupils. Consequently, pupils develop self-confidence, self-esteem and self-discipline. Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and they respond very well to many initiatives that encourage them to adopt healthy lifestyles. They work hard and play well together, forming excellent relationships. The school works hard to help prepare pupils for life in a multicultural society and the world of work.

Leadership and management are good. The school's view of itself is broadly accurate and has resulted in a clear strategy for further improvement. This includes the development of the roles of the leadership and management teams to ensure greater consistency in the way that pupils' progress is monitored. The quality of governorship is good as the board is closely involved in the strategic development of the school and has a growing understanding of how to measure its performance. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by helping the pupils to develop a fluency in their handwriting and by supporting their confidence in using a rich vocabulary.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and achievement is good. Pupils build successfully on the secure foundation to their learning in Year 3 and progress well throughout the school. Standards are rising because teachers make more effective use of assessment data when planning lessons. This is reflected in the trend of improved performance in the national tests for pupils in Year 6. In science, pupils benefit from the exciting investigative approach to learning and an increasing proportion of pupils achieve the higher levels. Pupils' achievement in reading and mathematics is consistently good but it is less secure in writing. This is because the pupils have lacked opportunities to develop their writing in other subjects and lack confidence in using a range of vocabulary. Furthermore, many have not developed a fluent handwriting style. Better resources and training for staff have helped to raise standards in information and communication technology (ICT).

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Moral and social development are particular strengths. Relationships are very harmonious. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school with its warm and welcoming atmosphere and exceptional range of extra-curricular activities. This is reflected in their attendance which is above the national average. Pupils participate fully in making decisions about school life and value their school council as an effective forum for change. They take full advantage of the opportunities the school provides for taking responsibility, for example, selling healthy snacks and helping out at break times. They believe bullying is not an issue at their school and say, 'You can always talk to a teacher if you have a problem.' Because of this they feel safe and value strategies that teachers have put in place to help resolve any potential difficulties that may arise. They talk proudly of the 'Buddy Stop' they run at lunchtimes, a first port of call for anyone who feels unhappy. Pupils make valuable contributions to the community by raising funds for charities. Pupils' excellent attitudes and improving skills prepare them well for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Pupils enjoy their lessons because there is a wide range of interesting activities, resources that bring topics to life, and a variety of approaches that take good account of the different ways in which pupils like to learn. However, in a few classes the potential of ICT is underused. Teachers make effective use of accurate assessment so tasks provide the right amount of challenge and pupils' motivation is high. Pupils are keen to answer questions because they know that their responses will be valued. Their personal development is promoted most effectively because teachers make clear their expectations of good learning behaviour and encourage independent, group and team activities. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to learning by giving the right amount of support. There is a buzz in many lessons and a slick pace, promoted, for instance, by setting time limits for the completion of tasks.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The headteacher and staff have successfully breathed new life into the curriculum by creating a broad, flexible, rich and enjoyable set of learning experiences that meet pupils' needs well. The curriculum is good. French is taught and the new national strategies for literacy and mathematics are being implemented well. A thematic approach to learning has been fully introduced this term and is already a hit with pupils. Planning takes good account of the need to raise standards in writing, with opportunities for this effectively integrated with interesting themes, giving pupils a clear rationale for writing tasks. The school recognises that ICT needs to be used more to support learning and opportunities to do this are evident in planning. There is a good number of visits, visitors and extra curricular opportunities, particularly in music and physical activities. The school is extending the range of clubs available this term, including more for gifted and talented pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding pastoral care and parents have great confidence that their children are safe and secure in school. All requirements relating to safeguarding pupils are met and procedures for child protection are firmly in place. Good transition arrangements help pupils in Year 3 to settle quickly. Staff know pupils and their circumstances extremely well. Pupils feel confident that they can turn to staff if they have worries or concerns. They have a strong voice in the school and influence important decisions. Careful checking of pupils' progress identifies quickly those pupils that are falling behind or those who need an extra challenge. Well-constructed individual plans, drawn up with and approved by parents and pupils, ensure that all groups of pupils receive the support that they need, including those that are gifted and talented. The school has a successful strategy to help those with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties to adjust to school routines. Academic guidance is good. Marking is helpful and constructive and pupils know their group and individual targets for improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher approaches his work with a passion that is tangible and has served to motivate the whole school community. He maintains a clear view of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the school and, since his appointment in 2005, has resolutely fashioned strategies to bring about school improvement. The cornerstone of his work is the uncompromising approach to equal opportunities which is evident throughout the school. The quality of the relationships and the strength of the teamwork provide confidence in the school's capacity for further improvement. Notable successes are the strengthening and sharpening of the school's assessment arrangements and curriculum innovation. Although the newly formed leadership team has yet to become fully involved in monitoring school effectiveness, the staff are growing in confidence in their role as managers. Governors too are committed to foster the work of the school and provide conscientious support. Their awareness of their responsibility to hold the school to account has grown and they fulfil their role as critical friends effectively.

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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?	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 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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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	2
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	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	1
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

24 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brimington Junior School, Springvale Road, Brimington, Derbyshire S43 1HF

We really enjoyed our visit to your school because everybody was so polite, helpful and friendly. We were very pleased to be able to work with you in your classrooms, join in with your assemblies and listen to your comments about Brimington. We can understand why you enjoy your school so much as there are many things that make your school special. Here are some of them.

- Everybody understands the school rules and your behaviour is excellent.
- Everybody tries to be friendly, thoughtful and helpful. Well done!
- You achieve a good standard with your work, particularly in science.
- The staff are very caring and provide a wide range of activities and visits to keep you interested.
- The school grounds are wonderful.
- The school is really well organised.

But of course, even though yours is a good school, there are still things that can be done to make it even better. The most important one is that we know that you can do even better with your work, particularly with your writing. So, we are asking everybody to help make your writing as good as possible. We are sure that Mr Hickey and the staff will work very hard to help you to improve, and we are sure that you will remember to thank them. I would like to wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Keith Edwards

Lead Inspector