

Brookfield Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118484
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	312959
Inspection dates	25–26 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Kevin Hodge

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	184
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	M DeYoung
Headteacher	Susan Fraser
Date of previous school inspection	25 November 2002
School address	Swallow Road Larkfield Aylesford ME20 6PY
Telephone number	01732 840955
Fax number	01732 875942

Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average and many pupils live locally. They come from a range of social backgrounds. When children enter the school, their levels of ability are below those which are typical. A larger proportion than usual is entitled to claim free school meals. Almost all pupils are White British and there are currently very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. An above average proportion has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has an acting headteacher, employed by the Local Authority, who started at the beginning of this term.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Brookfield provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. Its results in recent years have varied but the trend is now upwards, especially in mathematics, and pupils make satisfactory progress overall. The improvement results from a closer eye being kept on pupils' progress and a clearer focus on seeing what can be done to improve it.

Brookfield has a happy atmosphere that is apparent all around the school. One parent's view reflected that of many by saying, 'My child is extremely happy considering the short time he has been in the school'. The pupils behave very well both within classrooms and in the playground, where they are active and play together well. The good care and guidance the school provides underpins their good personal development and well-being. As a result, all pupils, including those with learning difficulties, really enjoy school, feel very safe and take on responsibilities enthusiastically, such as being school councillors.

Pupils, including those with learning difficulties, achieve satisfactorily. They have a good start to school in the Reception class and make up ground quickly, aided by good teaching. In Years 1 and 2 their progress, while satisfactory, is more uneven owing to some variations in the quality of teaching. The most able pupils are not stretched enough and the quality of teachers' marking in Years 1 and 2 varies between classes. This means that the good progress in Reception slows down. The pupils now reach broadly average standards by the time they leave, mainly owing to some recent good improvements in mathematics. Pupils speak clearly and generally have good listening skills, but their writing and science skills are weaker. Many pupils lack confidence in forming their letters and in being enthused to solve problems in science. The curriculum provides a satisfactory range of activities to broaden pupils' horizons and to develop their personal qualities. Special 'challenge' activities foster quicker progress in mathematical work but are not matched in science or writing activities, where there is less to engage and excite the pupils. Work in information and communication technology (ICT) is better than at the last inspection and is satisfactory. There is a good range of activities after school that pupils enjoy attending. The school's focus on recycling and energy-reducing initiatives develops pupils' sense of environmental awareness well.

The acting headteacher has combined the need for stability with seeking to improve aspects of the school, such as improving the monitoring of pupils' progress and intervening more quickly to help anyone struggling. Her own check on the quality of pupils' learning has identified weaker areas, and a clear short-term action plan is guiding improvement. Good links are made with others in the local community. The governors are supportive and visit the school regularly to help maintain the satisfactory level of leadership and management until a new headteacher is appointed.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start to school life. Reception classes are well led and organised. As soon as children start, their abilities are checked and suitable activities are devised which aid their learning. Good teaching, underpinned by good quality care, guidance and support for children, ensures they settle quickly into school routines. They make particularly good progress in their personal, physical and mathematical development. Their language abilities, while satisfactory, lag behind the other areas. Over half the children consistently reach the standards expected

for the end of the Reception year. Additional helpers in the class support activities well, both inside and outside the classroom, and are quick to spot children who need help. Parents are very pleased with the start their children make.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give pupils more guidance on developing their writing skills, so they form their letters more accurately and write with more confidence.
- Ensure that the quality of teaching and marking of work is consistently good in Years 1 and 2 so that all pupils, including the more able, make good progress.
- Devise more exciting activities in English and science so pupils are more confident and enthusiastic to write and to solve problems.

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

Pupils achieve satisfactorily in relation to their starting points. After they start school, they make up ground quickly and their progress is good in the Reception class. Over half reach the expected levels by the end of the year and they develop good attitudes to school and to each other. This good progress slows down and is uneven in Years 1 and 2. The pupils make good progress in mathematics because of effective teaching activities. This progress is not as apparent in aspects of their written work or science. By the time they leave, pupils reach broadly average standards, but results, particularly for the more able, have not matched the national picture. The school's own checks on current work indicate that the pupils' progress in Years 1 and 2 is improving as staff gain a clearer idea of pupils' progress. Pupils' abilities in ICT have generally improved because of better resources. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress in line with classmates as they receive close support within class or in small-group work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in their personal and social development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Pupils behave well, reflecting the school's focus on highlighting positive moral values. They respond enthusiastically to the caring and friendly school atmosphere. Pupils readily say that 'school is great'. A small number of pupils find it hard to attend regularly, but the attendance of most pupils is satisfactory. Many like making school an even better place for their friends and classmates, and being monitors in class and members of the school council. Pupils report they feel very safe and are confident to approach staff to express their concerns because relationships with them are very positive. The school successfully promotes healthy lifestyles and pupils like eating fruit at lunchtime and being active at playtimes. Opportunities to contribute to charity events such as the 'Blue Peter Appeal' assist pupils' enterprise skills and future sense of responsibility, but their weaker writing skills hamper their preparation for their next stage of learning. Pupils undertake some activities that raise awareness of other cultures, such as their 'Around the World Day', but their knowledge of diverse cultures is a comparative weakness.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching successfully promotes pupils' emotional and personal development and progress for those pupils with learning difficulties. In the Reception classes, teaching successfully gives children a wide choice of activities and both teachers and helpers support children to get the most learning out of them. In the remainder of the school, teaching promotes a caring atmosphere that helps pupils feel ready to learn. Teachers try hard to make lessons varied so pupils make quicker gains in their understanding, but some teaching does not stretch the abilities of the most able pupils in Years 1 and 2. Activities in science and writing develop certain skills effectively, but do not fire pupils' imagination to solve problems or develop greater skill, for example, in writing at length. Teachers have worked successfully to develop pupils' mathematical skills and lots of practical 'hands-on' activities help to develop their confidence and accuracy. Teachers give pupils help to improve, often by their good verbal support within lessons, but in Years 1 and 2 their marking of pupils' work varies between different classes, so not all pupils know how to improve their work more quickly.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and has a particularly positive effect on pupils' personal and social development. Activities planned to help pupils develop a healthy and safe lifestyle are effective and enjoyable. There is a good learning environment outdoors to enhance provision. Visitors and visits out of school, such as the recent trips to the Houses of Parliament and local church, help enrich the curriculum. Pupils have good opportunities to extend their learning after school, for example, in sports or dance clubs. The school's focus on developing pupils' sense of responsibility for their environment and achieving 'ECO' status is liked and supported by pupils. There is satisfactory provision for developing basic skills in literacy and numeracy, but some aspects of writing and science planning do not stretch pupils, particularly the most able. Resources are adequate, although there is limited provision in some areas of the curriculum. For example, there is a need for more resources and planning to develop pupils' greater understanding of people from different cultures and backgrounds.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a good quality of care for its pupils. There are effective routines in place to ensure pupils' smooth move into the Reception class and transition to the adjacent junior school. Teaching and support staff are eager to spot pupils' individual needs or difficulties. They provide good academic support for less able pupils and pupils with learning difficulties. Close links with external agencies ensure that any pupils who require additional help receive it promptly. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported well, often by one-to-one help. The school has systematic and effective procedures in place to keep pupils safe and protected as routines for assessing risks are well established. Although pupils often receive clear verbal support to help them in lessons, the use of target setting is sometimes inconsistent and not all pupils are clear about how it can guide learning, particularly in their writing and science work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The acting headteacher has developed a good sense of shared responsibility and teamwork among the staff in the short time she has been at the school. The two assistant headteachers support her well. The acting headteacher has quickly re-evaluated aspects of the school's work and has come to some realistic views of what needs to be improved and what is working well. The current development plan had too many priorities and these have been slimmed down to a shorter-term action plan to steer improvement more effectively. For example, writing and marking are earmarked to be tackled and changes to some assessment routines have already been implemented. Subject coordinators have clear responsibilities but have differing opportunities to oversee progress in their subjects. This has caused some delay in remedying weaker areas. The role of governors in holding the school to account is clear and supportive. The arrangements made to ensure the continuity of leadership have gone smoothly. The school's recent track record of improvement, including prompt tackling of some issues, and its sound understanding of its strengths and areas for development mean that it has satisfactory capacity to improve further.

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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?	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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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?	2

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	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

27 September 2007

Dear Children,

Inspection of Brookfield Infant School, Larkfield, Kent ME20 6PY

We liked visiting your school recently. Thank you for your help. Yours is a satisfactory school that is trying to be even better. Here are some of the things that we thought were particularly good.

- You all enjoy being at Brookfield and you help make it a happy place to be.
- Children in the Reception classes learn really well, helped by the exciting outside area.
- Your new acting headteacher is helping the governors and other teachers spot where things can get better.
- You said you feel quite safe and all the adults are good at helping you.
- Teaching is satisfactory and teachers try hard to explain things carefully and make you feel grown up and sensible.
- You know that getting exercise, drinking water and eating certain foods are good for you.
- The activities planned in lessons, along with extra help for those who need it, make sure you do not feel left behind.
- You make satisfactory progress in your work and reach average standards by the time you leave.

There are three things we have asked the school to do to help improve it some more:

- Help you with your writing skills so you can form your letters more carefully and be more confident to write even better stories or accounts.
- We have asked your teachers in Years 1 and 2 to stretch your thinking more and make sure that they mark your work better so you know how you can improve it.
- We have asked the school to see if they can plan some class activities in English and science that will really encourage you to become better writers and scientists.

You can help by thinking about what you can do to help your school get even better and by trying your best.

Yours sincerely,

Kevin Hodge, Lead Inspector

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