

Branston Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120403
Local Authority	LINCOLNSHIRE LA
Inspection number	313606
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Gill Broadbent

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	164
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Marjorie Duncan
Headteacher	Mr Richard Hall
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2003
School address	Station Road Branston Lincoln Lincolnshire LN4 1LH
Telephone number	01522 880555
Fax number	01522 880556

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This below average sized school serves the local community and surrounding villages. Almost all pupils come from White British backgrounds with very few from minority ethnic groups. A below average proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and statements of special educational needs. Pupils' academic standards are usually above average when they start school in Year 3. The school gained Investors in People awards in 2002 and 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school, with several good features. The school is improving the quality of its work because of the clear direction set by the headteacher who is supported by staff, governors and the vast majority of parents.

Good standards of care, guidance and support help to develop pupils' good personal skills and ensure their well-being, which both parents and pupils appreciate. Good attendance and good behaviour contribute much to a lively and enjoyable learning environment, leading to pupils who are enthusiastic and love learning. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and are confident that if bullying occurs it is dealt with. They actively support the school's request to eat healthily and they keep fit through taking every opportunity provided to play sports and games. A good number of pupils cycle to school. The curriculum is good because inspirational, exciting enrichment activities develop pupils' teamwork skills very effectively. An exceptional range of clubs and activities enriches the curriculum. Above average standards, effective teamwork and positive attitudes to learning prepare pupils well for their future lives.

Standards are above average and achievement is satisfactory. Good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, together with strong links to support services, enables them to achieve as well as others. The quality of teaching and learning has improved from satisfactory to good because of actions taken recently. Improved arrangements that prepare pupils to transfer to Year 3 help them to settle quickly and confidently and so learn successfully. Aspirational targets are set with pupils and their progress is checked to ensure that they are on course to reach them. Teachers use high quality questioning skills very skilfully in some lessons which increases the rate of pupils' progress further, although this practice is not yet widespread enough. There are early signs that the combination of all these recent actions is improving pupils' progress in lessons but it is too soon for this to be reflected in their overall rate of achievement.

Leadership and management at all levels are satisfactory. Following the last inspection, the headteacher's vision, direction and effective teamwork have enabled the school to progress. This includes improving standards in writing, the quality of teaching and learning, provision for music and the way the school is led and managed. Training has ensured that senior staff and subject leaders have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, which they fulfil diligently. The headteacher, staff and governing body have an accurate view of the school's strengths, which areas they need to work on and how to bring about improvements. Everyone understands that there is still more to do to become a good school. There has been good improvement in significant areas, which clearly demonstrates a good capacity to improve further. This is confirmed by the fact that there are early signs of standards rising at a faster pace than before. A vast wealth of detailed information about pupils' standards and progress in every subject is analysed and organised in a variety of ways. This complexity makes it difficult for leaders to easily identify how well their initiatives are improving pupils' achievement, in order to intervene swiftly if the rate of improvement dips.

What the school should do to improve further

- Streamline the recording and tracking of pupils' progress so that leaders can quickly establish how successful their work is in raising standards.
- Increase the rate of pupils' progress by sharing the excellent practice in using high quality questioning skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Over recent years, standards have been well above average in mathematics and above average in English and science. National tests in 2007 saw standards improve slightly in English and science and dip in mathematics. Standards in writing improved following a concerted effort from the school. Senior staff took swift action and standards have returned to their former high levels in mathematics. Achievement has been consistently satisfactory. Following recent successful initiatives, the rate at which pupils are progressing is accelerating and they are currently on track to reach aspirational targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are developing as responsible and confident learners, with high self esteem. School life is very much enjoyed. Pupils feel safe here because they are well cared for. Older pupils act as good role models, with some serving as trained 'peer mediators' to help resolve playground disagreements. Pupils are well-mannered, and behave very well in lessons and at break times. Their spiritual, moral, and social development is good. However, the school has correctly identified that cultural awareness is only satisfactory and more needs to be done. Pupils reflect with sensitivity and thoughtfulness towards the beliefs of others during religious education. Pupils are very clear about the importance of healthy lifestyle choices. The school actively promotes a wide range of sports and physical exercise and these are popular. Through the school council, pupils have the opportunity to share their thoughts on present and future developments. This makes a good contribution to the school and local community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is now frequently good because planning provides pupils with work at the right level. Activities are enjoyable and well chosen to help pupils learn effectively. These features, together with good relationships between pupils and staff and with each other, create a positive environment in which pupils thrive and enjoy learning. When pupils have difficulty understanding, the patient explanations of teachers and support staff build pupils' self-esteem and confidence to persevere. Teachers and support staff manage the behaviour of pupils well so that no time is wasted or learning interrupted. In excellent lessons, progress accelerates because teachers use skilled questioning to check pupils' understanding and use this to adjust the lesson accordingly. The targets set help pupils to know precisely what they are learning and what they need to do next. Homework is set regularly and provides good opportunities for pupils to practise what they have learnt in school. Marking is usually supportive, helpful and diagnoses what pupils need to learn to reach their targets, although this is not always the case.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a wide range of learning opportunities that engage pupils and make learning exciting. As one pupil commented, 'We do loads of really interesting things!' Lively activities, such as an 'outdoor and adventurous activities' week in the summer term, combined

with an impressive range of extra-curricular opportunities, ensure that pupils are highly motivated. Teachers make clear links between subjects, for example, in history and literacy when studying the Second World War, so that pupils understand that their skills need not be used in isolation. Teachers are committed to providing creative and practical learning experiences for all pupils, with imaginative activities ranging from model-making to computer animation. Whilst interactive whiteboards are used very effectively in some lessons to improve pupils' progress, the potential of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to enrich the curriculum has not yet been fully explored.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a very high level of pastoral care, with pupils feeling secure and happy in their relationships with staff. Pupils who are gifted or talented have many opportunities to extend their learning through activities in class or in additional clubs. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well catered for because staff teams are well trained to meet their specific needs. This is a very strong feature of the school's work. Teachers check pupils' progress regularly by using the new tracking system and their actions are now ensuring pupils get the guidance they need on a day-to-day basis. This is helping to increase the rate of progress pupils are making. Older pupils engage fully in assessing their own learning and identifying the next steps they need to take. Procedures for child protection and for making sure pupils are safe in school, and on trips outside, are fully in place.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher, senior managers and subject leaders are highly conscientious and work hard to bring about improvements. The excellent teaching expertise present amongst staff is not used well enough to help others improve their own teaching practice. The more experienced governors are knowledgeable and have a long established practice of monitoring the work of the school. They know its strengths and weaknesses well and challenge the school to improve the quality of its provision, which is beginning to have an effect. They are helping several newer members of the governing body to play their role in supporting and developing the school. The school improvement plan is clearly linked to systems for improving the performance of staff and pupils. The strategic analysis and use of national data has improved recently. Senior staff have identified accurately that consistently average achievement needs improving by raising standards, so that more pupils make good progress and reach higher levels. Inspection evidence supports the school's view that good, rather than satisfactory progress is gradually starting to become a reality.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	2
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	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?	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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

30 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Branston Junior School, Branston, Lincoln LN4 1LH

Thank you for your kindness and for making us feel so welcome when we inspected your school recently. This letter is to tell you about some of the important things that we found out.

Your school is satisfactory with some areas which are good. You are well cared for and you have developed some good personal skills. This means you work hard, behave well and enjoy learning, so well done. You reach standards that are above average which means you are doing reasonably well. There is hardly any bullying and if it happens, you are confident that it will be dealt with. You also help by being peer mediators at lunchtime so that others can go to you for help if they have a problem. The headteacher, staff and governors work well together and are determined to improve how well you are doing. You can all help by continuing to behave well and work hard.

The staff and governors want your school to be even better and they have confirmed that they will:

- streamline how they record and check on how much progress you are making so they can easily spot any areas which are not working so well;
- improve how much progress you make in lessons by helping your teachers to question you better, in order to find out how much you know.

I hope that you continue to help your school improve and enjoy your learning.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Gill Broadbent

Lead inspector