

Brooklands School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121778
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	314095
Inspection date	6 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Kath Halifax

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	40
6th form	8
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Roberts
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Buffett
Date of previous school inspection	13 September 2004
School address	Burnside Avenue Skipton North Yorkshire BD23 2DB
Telephone number	01756 794028
Fax number	01756 794200

Age group	2-19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school caters for pupils with severe, profound and complex needs, over a quarter of who have autism. This is higher than at the time of the last inspection. All have a statement to meet their special educational needs. Virtually all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion entitled to a free school meal is broadly average. The school has achieved the Healthy School Award and the Activemark. During this term, it has been managed by an acting headteacher and acting deputy and is awaiting the outcome of the local authority review into the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

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 that provides good value for money. Comments such as 'my child goes out with a smile and comes home with one', and 'my child is achieving things I never thought possible' are representative of how much parents value its work.

Standards are below average. However, given pupils' starting points, they make good progress and achieve well. This is because of good teaching. Teachers and support staff work extremely well together and are knowledgeable in working with pupils with severe, profound and complex needs. This means pupils make good gains in their awareness and understanding. Achievement in communication and pupils' personal development is particularly good. However, higher attaining pupils in Years 1 to 6 do not make as much progress in science as they do in other subjects. Successful changes for students in the post 16 unit mean its achievements now match those of other age groups. Moreover, excellent links with colleges, work providers, and the community make a substantial contribution in ensuring students have the necessary skills to make the transition from school to training, and to the wider world.

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. It is good for pupils and students over the age of fourteen, but too many changes are happening in other age groups for leaders to keep a check on how this is affecting achievement. Nevertheless, every effort is made to ensure activities are relevant and meaningful. Opportunities for a high percentage of primary age pupils to have weekly lessons in mainstream schools in their home area are especially beneficial towards academic progress and in pupils' social development. Furthermore, the expertise of Brookland's teachers is used well to enable a small number of pupils with severe learning difficulties to stay in mainstream education.

The gains pupils of all ages make in their personal development are a strength of the school. This is because of the good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and the good guidance they receive. Attendance is good; pupils are only absent when they are ill. Despite travelling considerable distances very few pupils arrive late.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school is being managed in the short term by an acting headteacher and acting deputy. Both are conscientious and determined to maintain the school's effectiveness. In their enthusiasm they have introduced a number of changes, but these are too much for a small staff. Alongside governors and subject leaders, they recognise the need to prioritise and focus on what is most important. Nonetheless, under the interim leadership, there are good systems and procedures to give the school satisfactory capacity to improve and, other than for improvements in the accommodation, good progress has been made since the last inspection. This is reflected in pupils' learning.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Students in the post 16 unit make good progress because of good teaching and a good curriculum. Furthermore, good leadership and management give the unit good capacity to improve. Considerable changes for the better have been made to the provision. Students are now taught separately from other age groups and are able to gain a wider range of awards matched to their ability. For example, links with colleges and work placements have enabled students to gain skills in floristry, small animal care and caf, work. In addition, students are growing in confidence when using public transport, in working with members of the public,

and preparing for life after school. The accommodation remains an issue. The room is small for the number of young adults in the group, which includes wheelchair users. Furthermore, it restricts activities. Students have no social area and have to share toilet facilities. While plans have been drawn up for improved accommodation, four years on, they are still to materialise. Very close links with parents contribute to students' learning. Students are particularly proud of the money they earn at home, and then bank themselves in town, through tasks such as washing up, changing bed linen and helping to prepare food.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The provision is satisfactory. Currently only one child is of Foundation Stage age and is working on an appropriate curriculum with pupils in Key Stage 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the achievement of higher attaining primary age pupils in science.
- Ensure leaders at all levels focus on the priorities which will most help the school move forward
- With the local authority, push strongly to bring the plans for improved accommodation come to fruition.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils in all age groups achieve well because teachers mostly provide work that stretches all capabilities and makes them think. This is especially so in communication and language, where teachers use the method most suitable to ensure all pupils take an active part in lessons and other activities. For example, pupils with autism confidently use a picture exchange system to request snacks and drinks, though they are not quite so sure when using the system to check their daily and lesson activities. Despite limited facilities, pupils in Years 7 to 11 achieve as well in science as they do in other subjects. This is not the case for all primary age pupils. Higher attaining pupils do not do as well as they should because the work is not sufficiently challenging. Considerable progress has been made in pupils' achievements in information and communication technology since the last inspection. As well as gaining, for example, keyboard skills, computer skills are developed well in other subjects. This was very evident when primary age pupils used computers to aid the designing and making of a three-dimensional animal.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: Insufficient Evidence

From the time they enter the school, pupils are encouraged to communicate, gain independence and acquire skills for living. Whenever practical they are expected to make decisions. Pupils are very well behaved and, though many have complex needs, are tolerant and watch out for each other. They are proud of their achievements and were thrilled, for example, to be complimented by visiting college lecturers on the quality of the three-course lunch they had produced. An understanding of being a good citizen is gained through activities such as recycling and making sure the school is an orderly community. Other than collections for charity, little contribution

is made to the wider and international community. Equally, while pupils gain an awareness of other cultures, opportunities are missed in planning and displays to appreciate and celebrate diversity.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Good staff training and experience enable adults to work effectively with pupils with severe and complex needs, and in managing challenging behaviour. This results in a calm school with minimal interruption to learning. Staff now make far better use of signs and real objects to aid the progress of pupils with autism. While symbols are used well in some circumstances, not enough use is made of them to support displays in the primary department, and to support lessons and routines in a number of classes. Targets for literacy, numeracy and social development are set for all pupils through individual education plans. These aid progress, but the quality of the plans is variable, especially in the way they are evaluated. Pupils of all capabilities show good levels of concentration because they enjoy learning. This is particularly evident in the use of interactive white-boards and computers to gain attention and maintain interest.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Staff endeavour to provide a curriculum that is relevant to pupils' needs and interests. The focus on numeracy and literacy enables pupils to do well in these areas. Similarly, a varied programme of sport, and personal, social, health and citizenship education encourages pupils to keep healthy and safe. Equally, a range of visits and visitors enriches what is taught in the classroom. While long-term plans are in place to ensure pupils are taught all subjects, there is no check on the time allocation or that the foundation subjects are taught in sufficient depth. This is further complicated by the changes that have been introduced this term.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Most systems to safeguard pupils are very good. Leaders recognise, however, that more needs to be done to make certain pupils with autism are familiar with emergency evacuation procedures. Similarly, that actions to move pupils from standing frames to wheelchairs in case of such an eventuality are clear and practised regularly. Parents appreciate the good personal support they and their child receive remarking, 'no matter how small the problem, things are dealt with professionally and sympathetically'. They value the daily diary system, but a number note most of the comments refer to social development and say they would like more information about academic progress. Effective links with a range of health and other professionals add very much to pupils' well-being.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The acting headteacher and deputy are working extremely hard to maintain staff, parent and pupil morale during a time of uncertainty. Parents, staff and governors praise how they have risen to the challenge. Through maintaining the quality of teaching, and links with parents and other professionals, the school runs smoothly and continues to raise achievement. Recognising the lack of experience in the leadership team, the local authority has recently provided an experienced headteacher to mentor the school. Governors are very supportive, but while they question reports and statistics, on occasions, they have not asked those that are most important. With only three full-time teachers, the remainder being part-time, co-ordination of all national curriculum subjects is proving difficult. In most subjects, development plans are in their infancy and do not always lead directly into the overall school development plan. While the plan is focussed on raising standards, some aspects of its anticipated success cannot be easily measured.

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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?	2	2
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?	2	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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?	2	IE 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	3	
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	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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.

² IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	2
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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
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	3	
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

Most of you know Janet and myself visited your school to look at your work and talk to you and your teachers. We enjoyed our day, especially having lunch with you and finding out about all the exciting things you do.

Brooklands is a good school that is giving you a good education. These are some of the things we particularly liked:

- All of you enjoy learning and make good progress because teachers make your lessons interesting.
- The way students in CE2 learn has really improved, especially through the links with colleges and work placements.
- All adults look after you well. How they work with your parents, with speech and language, physios and other therapists, makes sure you are well cared for and comfortable when you are learning.
- Using local shops, cafes, churches and other facilities allows you to have a better understanding of what you are learning.

These are some things that would make your school even more successful:

- We know those of you in classes 1, 2 and 3 who learn more quickly could do better in science.
- There have been a lot of changes in who runs the school. The new leaders are working very hard, but we would like them to try not to do too much at once and just deal with what is most important.
- Class 6 now have a room all to themselves, but it still isn't good enough for students of their age, so we hope the plans to make the caretaker's house into a class 6 base happen really quickly.

We wish you well for the future.