

Brackley Church of England Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121961
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314167
Inspection dates	29–30 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Ruth Westbrook

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	227
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cecil Thompson
Headteacher	Loretta Boreham
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2005
School address	Manor Road Brackley NN13 6EE
Telephone number	01280 707060
Fax number	01280 700953

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized junior school, serving the market town of Brackley. The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals and those from minority ethnic groups are well below average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Pupils' standards of attainment on entry to the school are broadly average, although they do fluctuate from one year group to another and sometimes are above average. The headteacher was appointed in September 2008. At the time of the inspection, three subject leaders were on maternity leave. Little Oaks Pre-School is a privately run pre-school facility on the school site.

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. Over the last year, there has been an unsettled period of staffing difficulties and leadership changes. This led to a decline in standards in 2008. Since her arrival, the headteacher has provided good leadership, and good support to temporary subject leaders who are developing the skills to lead their subjects. She has a clear view of what the school needs to do to move forward and has effectively shared this with the school community. Monitoring has identified some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning as the key contributors to the decline in standards. Low expectations and imprecise assessment were identified as the main causes. Already, a number of strategies are improving teaching and learning, which are satisfactory. Expectations are rising and this is leading to accelerated progress and improved standards. The majority of parents are entirely positive in their evaluation of the school's work, although a number of parents from one class in Year 3 commented rightly on the negative impact of recent staffing difficulties on the progress of their children. These have been addressed by the school. Parents are clearly confident about the direction in which the school is going. As one parent put it, 'The school has a new feel to it. There is a real buzz around the place.'

The good curriculum and effective care and support for all pupils in the school promote good personal development and well-being. As a result, pupils thrive. They say they feel safe and well cared for. Pupils have a good understanding of social responsibility and take up the many opportunities in school to help others and demonstrate what they have learnt. Governors and school leaders understand the needs of the community and work actively with parents, the church, other schools and local groups to meet those needs. The curriculum is planned effectively to increase pupils' understanding of diversity within the United Kingdom and globally. Pupils make an extremely positive contribution to the community, both in school, locally and much further afield. The school's musical life makes an outstanding contribution to this.

Achievement is satisfactory. Standards are average and all groups of Year 6 pupils make satisfactory progress from their starting points in Year 3. However, within this broad picture, the school's ablest pupils do not always make as much progress as other groups. This is because their work is not always challenging enough or the starting point is too easy. Systems for academic guidance and tracking are securely in place and beginning to embed in the school's work. Feedback to pupils on their work is good and is helpful to them. At the moment, literacy and numeracy targets are set for the whole class and do not always help individual pupils to know exactly what it is that they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. The school's evaluation of its work is accurate and, under the effective leadership of the headteacher, the school is laying a firm foundation for its plans for improvement. Considerable progress has been made already and there are clear indications of its future direction. Increasingly, subject leaders are playing a more effective part in the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop more detailed assessment records for numeracy and literacy that show exactly what each pupil has achieved, so that teachers can plan precisely the next steps in learning for each individual.
- Ensure that work fully challenges the ablest pupils of all ages.

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

Standards are average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The 2008 national test results reflected progress made by Year 6 pupils that was significantly lower than expected. However, Year 6 standards have clearly improved and are now average in mathematics and science, and above average in English. Pupils are making satisfactory progress. There has been a small amount of underachievement in the Year 3 classes affected by staffing difficulties, which the school has recognised and is addressing. All groups of pupils make satisfactory progress by the end of Year 6, but the school rightly identifies the progress of more able pupils as less secure than that of other groups. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because of the good support which they receive from learning support assistants. The school is now setting more challenging targets for pupils which will represent good progress, and teachers' expectations of pupils are increasing as a result.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy their learning and are proud of their work, such as the poems and pictures Year 6 have produced from their recent work on rivers. As a result, attendance at school is above average and most pupils' attitudes to work are positive. Most learners have a good understanding of how to be healthy. The majority comply with the school's advice on healthy snacks and lunches. Most are very active at break times and large numbers take up the option of extra sport and gymnastics. Pupils feel safe at school from bullying and racism. When there is the occasional problem, pupils have the confidence to seek help from an adult and know that they will be listened to sympathetically. The behaviour of pupils is good. They are very welcoming and polite, and their positive attitudes in the classroom contribute well to learning. Most work well in partnership with others. Their full participation in all aspects of school life contributes to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are prepared well for their future lives through a range of projects. They respond well to opportunities to implement their own ideas, such as their involvement in fundraising for the 'trim trail' and provision of lockers.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, and an increasing amount is good. Staffing difficulties have slowed some pupils' progress in the past year. Most planning takes account of the range of abilities within a group, but the challenge for the ablest pupils is not always reached in the lesson because the starting point is usually the same for all. As a result, the pace for this group of pupils is sometimes too slow.

Teachers manage their classes effectively and pupils respond well by taking a pride in what they do. They work purposefully both independently and in cooperation with others. Learning support assistants are deployed well to ensure pupils succeed. They understand their part in

planning tasks and give good support to all pupils in classrooms and small groups, and especially for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) skilfully through interactive whiteboards to bring lessons to life. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and give good feedback to help pupils understand how they can improve. This often results in the pupil responding with additional work. Class assessment records are being developed particularly well in Year 4, but as yet they are not detailed enough in other year groups. This restricts the setting of specific literacy and numeracy targets for each pupil to help them understand how well they are doing and what they need to learn next.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The opportunities for pupils to use literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects are increasing. Where this is happening, it generates a great deal of enjoyment. For example, pupils in Year 6 explored effectively the use of argument in a piece of writing by basing it upon their study of the fears and delights of children evacuated during the Second World War. The use of ICT has improved since the last inspection. It is now satisfactory. Pupils' skills are developing quickly as facilities have been enhanced with laptop computers and a wireless connection. The art and drama curriculum is good and the development of music throughout the school is outstanding. Large numbers of pupils with varying levels of experience perform regularly as members of the school orchestra and choir. Visits, including residential visits, enhance pupils' knowledge of the world around them. The wide range of extra-curricular activities includes, for example, model-making, skipping, knitting, music and sports. All clubs are fully supported. For example, the school orchestra meets at 8.00am and is very well attended.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The staff care well for all pupils and work hard to involve them in all that the school does. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and pupils with other additional needs are well supported and communication between home and school about their needs is good. There are secure procedures for safeguarding pupils and these are reviewed frequently. Systems to track the progress of pupils have improved recently, and are now applied regularly and consistently. The school uses the resulting information to identify target groups for classroom intervention and additional support. Reward systems are clearly shared with pupils, and team points motivate pupils to behave well and make a contribution to the school community. The arrangements to induct new children into the school are excellent. The pairings between new or younger pupils and older pupils are mutually beneficial. Parents have many useful opportunities to meet teachers, including the recently introduced weekly half-hour when parents can join their children and find out about the school's work. The weekly newsletter gives extensive information about opportunities and achievements within school and the locality.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides a very clear sense of direction for staff of the school. All staff and governors have been fully involved in developing plans for the school's future. The central focus of these plans is to accelerate progress and raise standards. The monitoring and evaluation

of the school's work have been more systematic over the last term and are beginning to influence the planning more directly. The headteacher has shared very clear expectations with staff of the standards pupils should be reaching if they are to make good progress from Year 3. Systems to track progress and the analysis of data have improved considerably and are now able to pinpoint where pupils are on target and intervene when not. Subject leaders are beginning to contribute more effectively to this monitoring as their skills develop. This work is beginning to raise teachers' expectations of pupils' achievement and their progress is accelerating. The school has developed its links with external partners over the last term. The partnership with the local authority is making an effective contribution to raising standards. Governors have also benefited from this partnership and are now playing a more active part in holding the school to account. They are contributing soundly to the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work. The partnership which has developed over the last term with the feeder infant school is particularly effective in ensuring that expectations of pupils' progress on entry do not dip.

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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	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/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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	1
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 learners' needs?	3
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

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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brackley Church of England Junior School, Brackley NN13 6EE

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us on our recent visit to your school. Your comments were very helpful to us. We think it is a satisfactory school and that it is improving. We would like to share with you what we have learned.

You make satisfactory progress in your work and reach average standards by the end of Year 6. You are taught satisfactorily. All staff and your headteacher care for you very well. As a result, you feel safe in school and that there is always someone to help you if you need it.

You are happy at school and enjoy the interesting curriculum and large number of clubs and visits that are available. You are polite and friendly to each other and visitors. Older pupils care particularly well for younger ones and you find many ways to help new pupils feel happy in school. We were very impressed with the music which you all make in assembly through your beautiful singing and instrument playing. The orchestra and choir are outstanding. Through these and other activities, you make an excellent contribution to your school and local communities. You are good at understanding how to keep healthy. We were impressed by your enthusiasm for keeping fit, and by the large numbers of you who take part in teams and clubs beyond lessons.

We have asked your headteacher and her staff to make sure that some of you are set more of a challenge in your work to help you to reach higher levels. We have asked teachers to use their assessment of your work to give you a more personal idea of what you need to do to improve. I am sure from what I have seen of your positive attitudes to learning that you will play your part in making sure that these plans work so that you can make even better progress in the future.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Westbrook

Lead inspector