

Brookside Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123007
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	314453
Inspection dates	31 October –1 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Malcolm Johnstone

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Stephen Marshall
Headteacher	Mr Nicholas Cornell
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2003
School address	Bucknell Road Bicester OX26 2DB
Telephone number	01869 252482
Fax number	01869 249402

Age group	3-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is similar in size to most other primary schools. It is situated in an area with features of socio-economic disadvantage. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage with small numbers from a wide variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. A few of these pupils are at the early stages of English language acquisition. An above average percentage of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is above average. During the past two years, the school has received a number of national awards related to the arts and healthy eating.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory and improving education with good features. Most parents are supportive of the school in all aspects of its work. One parent wrote 'our children are very happy at school and show good understanding of their learning'. Children receive a good start to their education in the Foundation Stage where provision has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and provision for care, guidance and support are good. There is a good curriculum with a wide range of enrichment activities including sport and the arts. Pupils enjoy school and behave well. Despite the extensive and disruptive building work, the school remains a calm and orderly environment where pupils say that they feel safe.

Achievement is satisfactory overall. Most children start school with very low attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy. By the end of Year 6, standards are below the national average but show gradual improvement since the previous inspection. There is some variation from year to year dependent on the different numbers of pupils with learning difficulties. Mathematics is the weaker area. Pupils find difficulty in applying their knowledge in problem solving situations and in recalling basic number facts quickly and accurately.

Based upon its impact on pupils' achievement over time, teaching is satisfactory. It is improving with mostly good and some outstanding teaching. This is leading to improvements in pupils' rate of progress. In some year groups, there is still some satisfactory teaching. At these times, progress is not as rapid and results in breaks in the continuity of learning. In mathematics and science, more pupils are capable of reaching higher standards. Some of the teaching does not challenge these pupils sufficiently. Most pupils who have learning difficulties and the few minority ethnic pupils at the early stages of learning English make similar progress to all other pupils. Good individual sustained support for pupils with more severe learning difficulties helps them make good progress. Pupils achieve well in information and communication technology (ICT), the arts, sport. They develop a good understanding of how to stay safe and how to lead a healthy lifestyle.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has been in post for three years and a new senior management team was formed two years ago. They are committed to raising standards and school improvement planning accurately assesses the needs of the school. Good teamwork has been established and all staff are pulling in the same direction. Self-evaluation is good. There is good analysis of performance data, monitoring of teaching and scrutiny of pupils' work. The use of data analysis and monitoring is beginning to bring about gradual improvements but is not firmly established and is not yet having a significant impact on standards and achievement. Target setting is satisfactory. It provides adequate challenge but has maintained standards at a satisfactory level rather than, for example, helping to stretch the more able pupils. The school has the necessary potential for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. There is a warm and stimulating environment and this engenders confidence and a love of learning. As one parent wrote, 'my child very much enjoys school and looks forward to returning after each holiday period'. Teaching is consistently good and on occasions, it is outstanding. This enables children to make good progress. The

curriculum is good and there are many opportunities for language development across all the areas of learning. There is a sensible balance of adult initiated activities and those chosen by the children. The outdoor accommodation is used well to develop learning. Assessment is effective and used successfully to match activities to children's needs. There are good relationships between home and school and these help children settle into school routines well. There is good leadership and management.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards generally, with particular emphasis on mathematics.
- Improve teaching and learning so that pupils make consistently good progress and the work for the more able pupils offers greater challenge.
- Ensure that the use of assessment, tracking, and target setting is established consistently across the school and monitored stringently to gauge its effectiveness.

A small proportion of 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

Due to the very low starting point of most pupils entering the school, only a small but increasing number of children attain the expectations for pupils entering Year 1. Good provision in the Foundation Stage and recent improvements to adapt the Year 1 curriculum to meet the needs of these children is ensuring that they make good progress. Over the past two years, standards have improved by the end of Year 2 but remain well below the national average. The good start they get in the Foundation Stage is beginning to feed through into Years 1 and 2. By the end of Year 6, standards are improving but are below the national average in English and science. They are now moving close to national averages in English. In relation to their prior attainment, pupils' achievements are satisfactory. Standards are well below average in mathematics. Pupils' problem solving and mental recall skills are relatively weak and key skills and knowledge have not been developed effectively from one year to the next. The school is beginning to work successfully on these weaknesses and pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress. Above average numbers of pupils with learning difficulties, which in some year groups is more than fifty per cent, has an adverse affect on standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' demonstrate a good understanding of their own and other cultures, particularly in art and music. Attendance has improved and is now similar to the national average. Pupils enjoy coming to school, behaviour is good and pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They understand how their actions affect others. Relationships are good and pupils are polite and courteous to visitors and to each other. Pupils say that isolated incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. They willingly take on responsibilities through the school council and as class and school monitors. Pupils are increasingly involved in decision-making and are proud of their part in developing the school library and supporting charities. They understand the importance of maintaining a healthy life style, enjoy physical exercise and know how to keep safe. This and the standards pupils attain prepare pupils satisfactorily for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers are working together well and show determination to improve standards and achievement. All staff have a strong commitment to professional development. They have good relationships with the pupils and good classroom management skills ensure that lessons are calm and orderly. There are high expectations of behaviour and involvement of all in the activities provided. Good classroom assistants who work well with the teachers support this effectively. Pupils enjoy their learning and many speak enthusiastically about their lessons. There is still some satisfactory teaching, mostly in mathematics and in these lessons, progress is not rapid enough to make up for previous gaps in pupils' learning. Day-to-day assessment procedures have developed well since the previous inspection. However, they are not always used consistently well, for example, to challenge the more able pupils. Marking is good and work has developmental comments that indicate how it might be improved.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum covers all subjects, including French. There are well-planned links between subjects. For example, in Year 5/6, literacy work is linked well to a history topic. This makes the work more interesting and relevant to the pupils. There is a good range of well attended after school clubs including a 'Children's University' with many day and residential visits extending and enriching the curriculum. Outside specialists enhance provision in music, creative arts, and sport. ICT is used well to support work in other subjects and contributes well to pupils' learning and enjoyment of school. The curriculum for mathematics provides insufficient focus on the development of key skills from one year to the next. Consequently, there are gaps in pupils' knowledge and some work is repeated at a level that provides insufficient challenge, particularly for the more able pupils.

Well-organised intervention strategies ensure that the needs of those pupils with learning difficulties are met well. The curriculum promotes pupils' personal, social and emotional development well and successfully supports healthy living and staying safe.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are cared for well and there are good procedures to ensure they are safe. Child protection arrangements are good and the school works well with other agencies to support vulnerable pupils. Parents trust the school to take care of their children and pupils say an adult is always available if they have any problems or concerns. Pupils with learning difficulties are well supported and guided enabling them to progress at the same rate as other pupils. Academic guidance is mostly good. Pupils have group targets for literacy and numeracy that guide their academic progress well. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have individual targets that give more specific guidance as to how well they are progressing. However, not all pupils are aware of their targets and how to achieve them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. In some key areas, leadership has been highly effective. For example, the strong teamwork and shared commitment to improve creates a happy atmosphere and a good and exciting curriculum. The headteacher and senior management team place great store in promoting pupils' personal development and care. This has ensured that there are good relationships in the school, pupils enjoy all activities and behaviour is good. The headteacher takes on board the views of staff, governors, parents and children so that most say that they feel involved in the school's development. Self-evaluation is good and based on information from comprehensive tracking of pupils' progress. This has developed well since the previous inspection. There is a good school improvement plan that has a clear focus on raising standards. There has been marginal improvement in standards and achievement but the school's track record does not show any significant upturn. The good systems to check on how well pupils are doing are not embedded in the work of the school and have not had sufficient time to show significant impact on improvement. Governors fulfil their statutory duties and support the school well. They are increasingly involved in strategic planning and hold the school to account for the quality of education it provides.

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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?	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	2
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	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

12 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brookside Primary School, Bicester, OX26 2DB

I would like to thank you on behalf of the inspectors for the friendly welcome we received when we visited your school. I am writing to tell you what we found out. Your school provides a satisfactory education with some important things that are good and some that could be better.

We were impressed by your good attitudes to learning and how well that you all get on together. It was good to see how well you are coping with all the building work that is taking place. We would like to thank all the pupils who shared their views with us. This gave us a good idea about what you think of your school. You behave well and work hard in lessons. Teachers try hard to make these lessons interesting and enjoyable. We were very impressed with the lovely art work in school and are very pleased to see how many of you take part and enjoy the many after-school clubs, including your own University. You tell us that there is always someone to help if you have any concerns. We were pleased to see that you know about healthy eating, keeping safe and the importance of regular exercise.

We know that most of you try your best in English, mathematics and science but we feel that you could do even better. We have asked your teachers to ensure that you get more practice, particularly with your number work and that all of the work is more challenging. We have asked the headteacher to make sure that an even closer check is kept on your progress so that you achieve as well as possible.

Best wishes for the future.

Mr M Johnstone

Lead Inspector