

Brooke School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125801
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	315313
Inspection dates	25–26 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Patricia Potheary

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	138
6th form	10
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gerry Launchbury
Headteacher	Sheila Cowen
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2004
School address	Overslade Lane Rugby CV22 6DY
Telephone number	01788 812324
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Age group	2–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Brooke is a large special school for pupils and students with moderate or severe learning difficulties. A minority of them have additional difficulties, including autistic spectrum disorders, physical disability, specific learning difficulties or complex and profound needs. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a small minority from a variety of other ethnic groups. The school runs a nursery with 21 children under the age of three, which acts as an assessment unit.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Brooke is a good school. Pupils and students achieve well academically and make outstanding progress in their personal skills. The school has light, airy classrooms and exceptionally attractive and varied outside spaces where pupils and students can relax, enjoy themselves and learn. The school makes the most of this uplifting environment to support and guide pupils and students well in all aspects of their development. For this reason, learners of all abilities make good progress in the majority of their subjects, including English and mathematics. Progress and achievement are equally good for children in the nursery and for students in the sixth form, and they all leave with relevant qualifications. This results from good leadership and management and good teaching, where learners and their well-being come first. All learners clearly enjoy school very much; as one explained, 'I can't wait to get up in the morning to go to school.'

Lessons include a good variety of interesting activities to bring learning alive and engage pupils and students fully. The resulting good progress is evident in all age groups except for some of those aged 11 to 14, where progress tends to slow and is satisfactory rather than good overall in English and mathematics. This is because some teaching, particularly for this age group, is not planned so effectively to meet individual needs; a fact recognised by the school. The skilled teamwork in lessons and the quality of relationships are exceptionally good, and explain why pupils and students are so positive about their learning.

School leaders have been effective in continuing to improve the school, constantly and successfully striving to make sure that pupils receive the best care and education. The school records a great deal of information about the progress made by individual pupils and students. This is used well to set targets and support planning in most lessons so that pupils and students are able to learn well. However, this information is not used in a way that gives the school's leaders a clear overview of how well different groups are performing so that they can pinpoint more precisely where improvement is most needed. Senior leaders have recognised that developing such systems is a key priority towards raising achievement further.

Pupils' and students' outstanding personal qualities are most evident in the rapid independence they develop as well as their considerable contribution to the community. There are many examples of them contributing to school development and representing the school in sport and the arts. They have, for example, taught the game of boccia to a local citizens group, and the primary pupils run a fruit service for the rest of the school. The good curriculum provides some outstandingly rich opportunities for pupils and students to develop all aspects of their personal and social skills, including very good systems to encourage independent travel, mobility and communication.

Pupils and students are very positive about the school and are particularly appreciative of the way they all help each other so much. Parents are equally positive about all aspects of the school, and as one parent, typical of many, said, 'The school staff are experts at bringing out the best in my child.'

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Sixth form provision is good. The sixth form is a well ordered, calm and happy place that students like coming to because, as one explained, 'we do new things every day.' Students achieve well and make good progress in their studies, many attaining the prestigious Silver Youth Award.

Their personal development and well-being are outstanding and they are exceptionally well prepared for life after school, which for most means enrolling at a local college or, for some, beginning full-time employment. Well-organised work-related learning, with one day a week spent in college, helps students in this journey. Good leadership and management accurately identify where improvements are most needed so that standards are continually improving. Good teaching ensures that lessons are planned to make learning relevant to all students, and is well supported by the skilled work of teaching assistants. The outstanding relationships that students have with staff mean that they are comfortable as learners, behaving exceptionally well. They show remarkable self-esteem and know exactly where they should go and what they must do. For example, students learn to travel on public transport, make their own lunches and hold discussions on a variety of current issues. Students achieve a range of suitable qualifications, although the types of course for the increasing number of more able students are underdeveloped. Nevertheless, opportunities are always found for them to study suitable courses elsewhere, such as construction or catering at the local college, and the school is working towards increasing the courses available in school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The quality of education and the progress children make are good in all areas of learning, and by the age of five, several of them are ready for mainstream school. The well-ordered sessions and the good relationships that staff develop with the children help them settle quickly, be happy and feel secure. There is a strong and successful emphasis on developing the children's social and communication skills as well as basic skills. This is achieved through a well-planned balance of teacher-led and self-directed learning. There is an excited buzz of activity as, for example, children learn about nature through exploring the classroom garden and working with leaves or garden tools. Good teaching is characterised by the substantial contribution of well-trained teaching assistants and good planning to ensure that all children progress well against their starting points, ready for the next stage in their learning. Leadership and management are good, overseeing an increase in children achieving their targets due to improved teaching of communication. As with the main school, careful assessment is made of how much progress each individual child is making in all the areas of learning, but there is no overview showing achievement over time for different groups or learning strands. This limits the school's ability to make even more rapid improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all pupils make good progress, especially in Key Stage 3, by improving the way teaching meets their individual needs in all lessons.
- Improve the way information on pupils' progress is used, to enable senior staff to identify clearly how well different groups of pupils are progressing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Attainment on entry is well below average, and standards remain at this level due to the nature of pupils' and students' learning difficulties. However, achievement and progress are good overall for pupils of all abilities, and they usually reach their quite challenging targets. Progress is not only good in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology

(ICT), but also in several other subjects, including music, drama and physical education. Progress is good in all age groups, with the exception of Key Stage 3, where fewer pupils make good progress and progress is satisfactory overall. This is due to variations in the quality of teaching, especially planning to meet different needs. Pupils and students achieve well in their courses and qualifications in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, and the standard of their qualifications is increasing each year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Parents are very pleased at just how much their children enjoy coming to school, and attendance is good. Pupils behave well overall, especially in lessons, and behaviour for older pupils and students is outstanding, particularly in their mature attitudes to learning and the way they help and support each other. Pupils and students work very hard and want to do well and they eagerly play a full part in the many projects and activities provided for them. Pupils and students have a very good understanding of how to lead safe and healthy lives. They take part in a great deal of sport, which they enjoy very much, and encourage others to eat more fruit. Their spiritual and cultural awareness is exceptionally well developed. There are numerous examples of the outstanding contribution made by pupils and students, from the wheelchair or mentoring training they undertake to help their peers, to helping organise an event held at the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching is good and this leads to good progress in a wide variety of subjects, especially art and food technology. Pupils and students' artwork is stunning and leads to several GCSE qualifications. Strengths in teaching include good subject knowledge and very effective teamwork, with teaching assistants contributing significantly to the good learning taking place. Lessons are based upon good assessment so that individual learners can be helped to progress at their own level. A few lessons, particularly within Key Stage 3, are not planned as effectively to meet pupils' different needs. This means that for some learners, progress is satisfactory rather than good. Tasks are usually interesting and varied so that learners are fully engaged and enjoying the lessons. As one student explained, 'The teachers are nice, but they make us do our best all the time.'

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is effective in promoting all aspects of pupils' and students' good learning and outstanding personal development, particularly in developing self-esteem. There is a significant commitment to include pupils and students with their mainstream peers which benefits more than half of all learners. Very successful provision encourages pupils and students to lead healthy lives, as demonstrated by the eagerness with which they take part in the extensive

sporting fixtures, including rowing, swimming, rugby and football. Exceptionally strong links with other organisations support a very rich curriculum with, for example, the Forest School and an excellent range of visits, projects and clubs. Performing arts are a particular strength. These opportunities support pupils and students in making an outstanding contribution to the community. With the exception of some literacy and numeracy, links between subjects and with the various activities are not systematically planned. This means that pupils' and students' overall learning experiences lack the continuity which would help raise achievement further, a fact recognised by the school in its forward planning. Pupils and students are very well prepared to take their place in the wider world, with good opportunities for learning about the world of work and enterprise, and extensive training in independent living, communication and basic skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Procedures to safeguard pupils and students are robust and all requirements are met. Support for pupils' and students' personal development is outstanding. Every care possible is taken to ensure that their welfare is a top priority, and extensive links with other agencies such as physiotherapy and speech therapy support this. Guidance to help learners reach high standards is good overall. Individual achievement is assessed well, challenging targets are set and progress is monitored carefully. This ensures that learners are kept on track and support is given where necessary. This system is less effective for some pupils in Key Stage 3. The school has also identified that learners are not sufficiently involved in the process and is planning to strengthen their understanding of what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well through good self-evaluation, which includes a detailed analysis of many factors, including parents' views. This has resulted in rising standards and a good range of improvements, most recently in students' practical applications of mathematics and in their writing. Whole-school challenging targets are set and met regularly, and the capacity to continue improving is good. Data is very detailed regarding individual learners but there is a weakness in the way this information is used. This means that senior staff and governors do not have a clear overview to enable them to identify how well different groups of learners are progressing over time. This prevents the work of raising standards from being even more effective. The school has recognised this and is working towards a system that will enable staff to clearly see variations in learners' progress.

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	2	2
The behaviour of learners	2	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

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?	2	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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
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	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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	2	
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

27 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brooke School, Rugby CV22 6DY

Thank you for being so welcoming when we visited your school. We very much enjoyed meeting you, joining you for lunch and seeing some of your lessons.

Your school has a lively and happy atmosphere. It is a good school, with many excellent things going on, just as you described. Good teaching helps you to make good progress in your lessons, especially in the way you communicate, and outstanding progress in your social and personal skills. Those of you in Reception also make good progress, with some exciting work in learning about the world of nature. Once you reach the sixth form, you clearly do well in preparing yourself for college and work through achieving well in your qualifications.

Staff and governors work hard to keep improving the school. For this reason, the progress you make is increasing all the time. We have, however, asked them to make sure that all of you make as much progress as the majority by improving the way some lessons help you learn. We have also asked that they look more closely at how different groups of you are doing so that different classes or those of you with particular strengths can be helped to make even more progress. I am sure that you will discuss this with your teachers and help them by working hard and doing your best to reach your targets.

Your teachers see to it that you have an excellent range of activities to help you develop strong confidence, independence, creative talents and understanding about the world of work. You were keen to tell us that the school also keeps you safe and looks after you well. It is therefore very pleasing to see that you are helping yourselves by taking plenty of exercise and eating plenty of fruit. Your behaviour is also good, especially in the way you value learning, and it is excellent in the sixth form.

We are also impressed with the large number of responsibilities that you take on within the school and how much help you give to others. You clearly really enjoy coming to school. All these things, together with your high quality basic skills and excellent skills in working together, will help prepare you very well for your college, work and future lives.

Yours faithfully

Patricia Potheary Lead inspector