

Brookvale Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132195
Local Authority	Halton
Inspection number	315961
Inspection dates	19–20 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Bamber

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	264
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Belfield
Headteacher	Mrs Barbara Boden
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2003
School address	Northwich Road Brookvale Runcorn Cheshire WA7 6BZ
Telephone number	01928 711401
Fax number	01928 711401

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized school serves an area that is twice as socially and economically disadvantaged as the norm. There is a much higher than average proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who have a statement of special educational need and who are entitled to a free school meal. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. The school has Healthy School Status and has earned an Activemark.

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 is particularly effective in ensuring that the most vulnerable pupils are very well cared for and nurtured. Standards are rising and overall pupils achieve well. This is because leadership is far sighted and the quality of teaching is good. In addition, pupils are provided with the sensitive care and support required to enable them to learn effectively and to develop into confident young citizens.

The curriculum is good and increasingly reflects pupils' real-life experiences and their interests. Senior leaders and managers are successfully reshaping the curriculum so that it is more creative and fires pupils' imagination.

The school's management has forged extremely successful links with many partners. These links have been and continue to be very effective in improving behaviour since the last inspection, in improving and maintaining attendance rates and in providing expertise to support the most vulnerable pupils and their families. The introduction of nurture groups and individual behaviour plans has enhanced the involvement, confidence and achievements of these most vulnerable pupils. In contrast to the last inspection, pupils' behaviour is now good and the vast majority of pupils have positive attitudes to their work and try hard to achieve their best. Pupils willingly take responsibility and eagerly seize on opportunities to make suggestions about how the school might improve.

Standards are broadly average but have improved well recently in Key Stage 2 (Years 3 to 6) in English and science. The quality of pupils' writing has improved strikingly as a result of senior leaders' focused drive to raise standards and of some outstanding teaching in Year 6. Standards in mathematics lag behind and the school acknowledges that pupils' ability to calculate mentally and to solve problems needs to improve in order to raise their achievement. The performance of the more able pupils is not high enough in Key Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2) and in some classes in Key Stage 2. This is because not all teachers set challenging enough tasks. In contrast, where teaching is at its best all pupils achieve very well because of pacy lessons and where much is expected of them. As with vulnerable pupils, the well above average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well supported, enabling them to achieve well. Central to their success are experienced and effective teaching assistants and their well managed provision.

Since the last inspection the headteacher and her able senior management team have made good improvements. This is particularly evident both in higher standards and a better curriculum in a range of non-core subjects - all those other than English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). The evidence of this improvement is in the determination and vision demonstrated by senior leaders and governors and in the school's ability to evaluate its provision realistically, albeit somewhat generously as regards one or two aspects. This indicates that the school has a good capacity to improve further. It offers good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The quality of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Parents speak favourably about this area of the school and are happy to bring their children to this safe and secure environment. They appreciate the sensitive way in which their children are welcomed. However, aspects of provision

and of assessment have relative weaknesses. These are mostly concentrated in the Nursery class. Children begin the Foundation Stage with skills that are well below the level expected for their age. This is particularly so in their language and communication skills. Children behave well and are keen to learn. However, in the Nursery, managers and staff pay too little attention to developing children's communication skills or to providing children with the necessary resources to promote good learning, both in or outside the classroom. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in the Nursery and good in Reception. However, because children are not assessed rigorously enough on entry to the Nursery, the school does not have an accurate picture of their starting points and is unable to track their progress rigorously enough.

In Reception, children make good progress as a result of well targeted teaching and support based on accurate assessments. They enter Year 1 with below average standards overall. Their skills in mathematical development are the strongest but in communication, literacy and language their skills are still quite weak.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils in Key Stage 2 achieve as well in mathematics as they do in English and science.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that in all lessons the most able pupils are consistently set work to challenge them.
- Improve the quality of provision and assessment in the Nursery to the good standards evident in the Reception class.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well overall. Many pupils enter the school with skills well below those expected and leave attaining average standards or in some cases, above average. In Year 6, over the last four years, pupils have performed better each year and, in English particularly, there have been greater proportions reaching the expected Level 4 and the higher Level 5. In mathematics, although there have been improvements, standards and achievement lag behind those in English and science. In these two subjects, the challenging targets set were exceeded and they were met in mathematics. The lower and average ability pupils achieve well in Key Stage 1, but insufficient challenge for the more able pupils at this key stage and in some Key Stage 2 classes detracts from their achievements. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or those who find behaving well more difficult achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good overall. They enjoy school and this is reflected in their good behaviour, enthusiasm for learning and much improved attendance, which is now above average. They say they feel special 'because our teachers are kind and help us to learn'. They greatly value opportunities to express their views and take responsibility, for example, as buddies, school councillors or playground leaders. The school acknowledges that pupils need to be more aware of the richness of different cultures. Pupils respond well to the effective programme to promote their personal, social and health education. As a result, they have strong self-esteem and a very keen understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, including how to eat healthily, look after their personal hygiene and the importance of exercise.

Pupils have a very secure knowledge of how to stay safe. For example, they understand the dangers of drug misuse, know the steps they should take if they come across bullying and appreciate systems for them to share any worries or concerns with the school's staff. Their strong sense of community is demonstrated through their fundraising activities and involvement in local environmental projects.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Most of the teaching is good, which enables many pupils to make good progress. The very good quality of relationships between adults and pupils ensures that pupils become confident learners, happily confessing to difficulties with their work and seeking help. Characteristics of the best teaching is a cracking pace, very high expectations of the quality and quantity of pupils' responses and work and excellent subject knowledge. These were all evident in an outstanding Year 6 literacy lesson when pupils made excellent progress in their ability to write a cogent, formal report.

Other strengths are in the support for lower ability pupils and in teachers' use of visual stimulus to help pupils understand more complex ideas. Teachers are becoming increasingly aware of the style of learning individual pupils prefer and are beginning to adapt their teaching accordingly. Where teachers encourage pupils to work cooperatively and to evaluate their own and each other's work, learning, achievement and pupils' personal development are at their best. This is not evident in all classes. Neither is the consistent use of teachers' marking to help pupils know what they need to do to improve their work nor, in some classes, sufficient challenge in the tasks set for the more able pupils. In contrast, teachers make good use of targets to focus pupils on their next steps in learning. Pupils appreciate these and take pride in achieving them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and effectively promotes pupils' basic skills in literacy, mathematics and ICT. Through the introduction of a curriculum based more on developing pupils' skills the school has been successful in linking subjects together and making learning enjoyable, more relevant and meaningful. The curriculum for children in the Nursery is only satisfactory because insufficient attention has been paid to encouraging children's language development and to providing stimulating resources to support their learning.

An exciting range of visits and visitors to the school promotes well pupils' personal development and provides them with ample opportunities to support their learning. Residential visits for pupils in Years 3 and 6 provide valuable experience of living away from home. This helps them to become increasingly independent and to take on personal challenges. Extra-curricular sporting and creative activities promote pupils' fitness, health and enjoyment and are very popular. Consequently, pupils develop interests that they can continue to enjoy in later life.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good quality care, guidance and support and this contributes positively to pupils' personal development and well-being. Parents speak warmly of their relationship with school and emphasise how well their children are cared for. Health and safety arrangements are firmly in place and, as a result, pupils state that they feel safe. Vulnerable pupils are very well looked after and the school works closely with a range of agencies to support them and their families. The use of a learning mentor is very effective, particularly in her contribution to improving attendance and in counselling pupils. There are well thought out systems in place to safeguard pupils and to reinforce and reward good behaviour. Staff respond to problems quickly. One parent who had a concern stated, 'You know something is going to be done about it.' Academic guidance is satisfactory. The systems to check pupils' progress are rigorous. However, when guidance is given it is sometimes too general. Support for pupils when they start school and in preparation to move to their next school is good and enables them to settle quickly and happily.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The able headteacher and the effective senior management team have a determination to continually improve pupils' standards, achievement and provision. In this they are predominantly successful. Typically parents comment that it is a lovely school because it is so well run and managed. Senior leaders' successful management of and direct involvement in strategies to improve standards in Key Stage 2 have borne much fruit.

The school has very potent partnerships with the adjacent children's centre, the family support initiative, the local authority and local schools and colleges. These partnerships enhance many areas of pupils' care, their personal development and their academic achievements. Senior leaders evaluate the quality of teaching and learning regularly through observing lessons and analysing pupils' work. As a result, they take appropriate action to provide staff with relevant training in order to hone their skills and to target areas of pupils' achievement, which need improvement. For example, the senior management team acknowledges that aspects of the provision in the Nursery need further development. The greatly improved quality of pupils' writing is testament to the better teaching of this skill, which has resulted from targeted training. Although the effectiveness of middle managers has improved since the last inspection, they are still insufficiently focused on evaluating the impact of their work in enabling pupils to achieve or to learn better.

Governance is good. Governors are not only committed and well organised but they are also challenging and proactive. They have taken the lead in promoting closer partnerships with local services and driving initiatives to support the most vulnerable pupils and their families.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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?	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
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
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

Inspection of Brookvale Primary School, Runcorn, WA7 6BZ.

On behalf of the team of inspectors may I thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. It is, as you told us, a good school. It is good at looking after you all but especially those of you who have more difficulty learning, behaving well or coping with school. I know that many of you appreciate the work of your learning mentor in helping you when you have problems.

You are taught well and the school provides you with lots of exciting things to do both in and out of the classroom. Several of you told us how much you enjoyed visits out of school, especially the residential ones. We were impressed with the way you help around the school and that most of you behave well and try hard to do your best with your work. It is very pleasing to see how much those of you in Key Stage 2 have improved your writing recently. It is clear that your headteacher and the other teachers who help to run the school have good ideas to make the school even better. I have asked them to work on three things in particular to help with this.

- To make sure that pupils in Key Stage 2 do as well in mathematics as they do in English and science.
- To help teachers to make sure that they set difficult enough work for those of you who find learning easier.
- For staff to improve the work and equipment given to the children in the Nursery and for their teachers to know exactly how they are getting on in their learning from when they start school to when they move to the Reception class.

Thank you again with helping us this week and keep trying your very best.