

Bracken Edge Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107909
Local Authority	Leeds
Inspection number	319248
Inspection dates	10–11 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Jane Hughes

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	321
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alan Moore
Headteacher	Ms Julie Harkness
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2007
School address	Newton Road Leeds West Yorkshire LS7 4HE
Telephone number	0113 2623335
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

When Bracken Edge Primary School was inspected in February 2007, it was given a Notice to Improve and asked to address issues related to: pupils' rate of progress; standards and achievement; provision in the Foundation Stage; teaching; and leadership and management. It was subsequently visited in October 2007 by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors, when it was judged to be making good progress.

This inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large school serves an inner city, multi-faith community. Increasing numbers of refugees and asylum seeker families are moving into the area. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is twice the national average. More pupils than average have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and this proportion continues to rise. Four out of five pupils are of a minority ethnic heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak a language other than English at home is more than double the national average. The school is part of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) Black Caribbean Achievement Project (BCAP) which provides the school with additional resources and support to secure the success of black minority pupils. The school has achieved Healthy School status and also the Stephen Lawrence award for promoting racial harmony. The school is due to move into the adjoining school building, currently under construction, in September 2008.

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. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Strong levels of racial harmony effectively support pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, an intrinsic part of their overall satisfactory personal development. The headteacher works hard to meet the needs of the changing nature of the local community. Welcome packs and buddies help new pupils to settle when they arrive, often from abroad with no previous experience of formal education or of speaking English. Pupils have an increasing understanding of how to stay safe. They also learn about healthy eating, although many do not yet put theory into practice.

Senior leaders have improved the school's performance within a short timescale. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. From very low starting points, standards are below average by the end of Year 6. The youngest and oldest pupils achieve well because teachers meet their academic needs more precisely. Standards by Year 6 rose in 2007, particularly in English where standards were above average, putting the school among the top 25% of schools nationally for pupils' achievement in this subject. Inspection evidence indicates that these improvements are being sustained in 2008. Even so, standards are too low by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Current school data shows that pupils are making at least satisfactory progress in every year group. The BCAP programme supports the progress of black minority pupils, particularly boys, very well. They now make slightly faster progress than other groups in school.

The leadership team holds a clear vision for future success. Staff morale is high. Parents typically comment, 'The whole school is vibrant, friendly and open.' Rising standards and pupils' better achievement, coupled with stronger provision, demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve. Governors now take a more active role in school life and provide greater challenge, support and skills. The local authority and other agencies have been invaluable allies and sources of expertise for the headteacher and staff. Senior leaders have developed teachers' skills so that lessons are now of at least satisfactory quality. In the Foundation Stage and Years 5 and 6, there is much that is good and better, but this is not consistently the case in other year groups. Pupils behave well and persevere with tasks set. Even so, pupils in Years 1 and 2 do not have access to a practical curriculum suitable for developing the investigative skills they learned so well in the Foundation Stage and this restricts their progress. The newly re-organised curriculum offers more variety to pupils. Strong pastoral support ensures that all pupils, whatever their individual needs, feel secure and well cared for. Staff are increasingly skilful in monitoring and tracking pupils' progress. Nevertheless, not all teachers are making best use of the plentiful assessment data to help plan their work. This means that activities in lessons are not always set at a level appropriate to pupils' needs.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children join the new Foundation Stage Unit with very low levels of skills compared to those typical for their age in all areas of learning. Although children's skills by the time they leave the Foundation Stage are still well below those expected, they now make consistently good progress as a result of improvements in provision. Just over half of the children work securely within the expected levels, the early learning goals, by the end of the year. The lively and

practical curriculum provides young children with good opportunities to choose whether to learn indoors or outside. The outdoor environment is a major strength in improving children's personal, social and emotional development. An emphasis on the development of language skills helps children to grasp that print carries meaning and that reading and writing are fun and worthwhile activities. Adults use assessment well to check children's achievement and to target accurate levels of support for individual learners. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed and provides a strong focus on children learning through finding out for themselves. As a result, children learn rapidly, ask questions and are curious learners. Inspection evidence and school data show that boys from black ethnic groups make the best progress. Parents say, 'My child is thriving in the Foundation Stage Unit.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in Key Stage 1.
- Broaden the curriculum in Years 1 and 2 so that pupils have more opportunities to learn practically through exploring and finding out for themselves.
- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching so as to accelerate pupils' progress throughout the school.
- Improve the use of assessment so that teachers plan work that meets the needs of the different age and ability groups in their classes.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit from an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

A range of satisfactory through to outstanding teaching, coupled with effective support programmes for pupils, is sustaining the gradual rise in overall standards seen in the 2007 tests, particularly by Year 6. Standards in English rose to above average. Standards in mathematics also improved but remained below average, while standards fell to well below average in science. A small proportion of pupils reached the higher levels in tests for the first time in three years. Standards by the end of Year 2 were exceptionally low in the 2007 national tests and assessments, however this represented satisfactory progress for the pupils, relative to their starting points. The most recent school records indicate that pupils in Years 1 and 2 continue to make satisfactory progress in 2008. Pupils who speak languages other than English at home receive sound support and often make slightly better progress than the minority for whom English is their mother tongue. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is growing. These pupils receive timely support through individual and group support programmes to achieve satisfactorily.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy school. They say that, 'Teachers are good.' and, 'Lessons are fun.' They respond with an irrepressible enthusiasm when they encounter something new. For example, during an information and communication technology (ICT) lesson, pupils exclaimed, 'Wow! I've got my own email address!' Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils show high regard for the feelings of others and collaborate well in lessons. Pupils are able to make the most of school time because everyone behaves well. Pupils' understanding of other

cultures is impressive. Parents and pupils are adamant that racial harmony is strong and this reflects what inspectors saw. Many parents bring their children to school regularly and on time and attendance rose in 2007 to reach an average level. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of what it means to live healthy and safe lifestyles, although many still have to turn good intentions into practice. Pupils take on responsibility well, although opportunities are missed for them to do more for their own school community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning varies from satisfactory to outstanding. Consistently strong teaching in Years 5 and 6, some of it exemplary, helps older pupils to reach higher standards and to rapidly redress gaps in their learning from previous underachievement. In these lessons, highly practical activities mirror pupils' own life experiences and maintain pupils' engagement in their learning. At the same time, good questioning promotes pupils' problem-solving skills and teachers' feedback in pupils' books is more specific in terms of the development of skills. Teaching in Years 1 to 4 is more variable, although never less than satisfactory. The pace of learning slows in lessons where pupils are required to sit and listen to adults for too long and teachers do not match work closely enough to pupils' ages and abilities. Lessons have fewer practical elements and lack relevance for pupils. Good support for the many pupils who speak languages other than English at home push on their learning, especially boys and pupils from black ethnic groups. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because staff have an increasingly clear overview of their individual needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum increasingly reflects pupils' cultural diversity. For example, pupils celebrate black history month and learn about the symbols of the Indian festival of Baisakhi. The school is steadily breaking down barriers between subjects and this is helping pupils to understand the relevance of what they learn and to achieve better as a result. Pupils single out 'circle time' for praise and say that this, 'helps you feel confident'. Opportunities to develop literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are planned throughout the curriculum, although ICT resources are very limited. Pupils do not have regular access to interactive whiteboards, for example, and this dilutes pupils' enthusiasm for some learning activities and slows their progress. The curriculum in Years 1 and 2 does not provide sufficient investigative and problem-solving opportunities for pupils. A wide range of visits, visitors and clubs helps to bring learning to life and contributes well to pupils' enjoyment and achievement. Some older pupils remarked that the school 'introduces you to new things that you didn't know you liked!' Popular sports clubs and physical education sessions as well as the timetabled personal, social and health education programme coax pupils to aspire to healthy and varied lifestyles.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Parents confirm that, 'teachers show enormous care and aspiration for the children'. There is strong pastoral support for all pupils and this helps them to settle in well, participate eagerly in all aspects of school life and eventually to move on with minimal anxiety. School counsellors,

mentors and a large number of bilingual staff, some funded through the BCAP programme, ensure pupils' personal needs are well met. There is high quality support for vulnerable children and their families. Pupils are encouraged to help newcomers, who arrive, for example, with an English vocabulary of two words. However, the quality of academic guidance is inconsistent. Staff do not routinely provide clear guidance for individual pupils about how to improve their work, particularly through their marking, and this slows pupils' progress. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher, deputy headteacher and other leaders have developed the necessary skills to bring about sustained improvement in a short time. They now have a clear understanding of what the school needs to do next in order to improve performance because assessment and monitoring are slick and inform decision making at all levels. Senior leaders recognise that there is still much to do to ensure that pupils achieve as well as possible and reach higher standards, particularly by Year 2. The literacy and numeracy coordinators speak with new authority and direct other staff clearly in terms of improving teaching and learning. Governors play an active role in the life of the school. They have a clearer understanding of strengths and development priorities and bring a range of skills to the leadership team. Parents are well represented on the governing body and are increasingly involved in school life. They feel welcome in school and say that the school is, 'heading in the right direction'.

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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	2

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
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	3
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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
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	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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being so friendly when we visited your school. We were so pleased to see how much you enjoy your time at Bracken Edge.

Many of you will remember that when your school was inspected last year there were quite a few important areas to improve. We now judge that your school is a satisfactory school and that your headteacher, deputy headteacher and all the adults are working hard to improve the school for you.

You all now do at least as well as you should in school because lessons are better quality. In Years 5 and 6 and in the Foundation Stage Unit, you do very well because you really enjoy all the investigations and practical tasks. All the adults are very good at encouraging you to behave and there is a really friendly atmosphere. Well done to all of you for making it such a happy place to come to every day! A very strong feature of your school is how well pupils from so many different ethnic backgrounds get on together. You help each other in lessons and are good at working with your 'talking partners'. All the adults take good care of you and many of you told us how you feel safe and cared for in school.

Part of our job is to help your school to do even better. We have asked your headteacher and all the adults to concentrate on helping you to reach higher standards by the end of Year 2. We would like those of you in Years 1 and 2 to find out more information for yourselves through practical activities and problem solving in lessons. We would also like more lessons to be good or excellent. Lastly, we would like the teachers to make better use of all the information they collect about each of you and your work. Then they can plan activities that help each of you learn better. This will all be a lot of hard work but we are sure that you will all carry on trying your best so that your teachers can do this well.

We know you are all very excited about moving to your brand new school building in September. We wish you all the very best of times there and hope you enjoy the views from the top floor!