

Brookland Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117272
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	326560
Inspection date	4 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Mary Summers

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	235
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sheila Farmer
Headteacher	Mrs Debbie Hoy
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Elm Drive Cheshunt Waltham Cross Hertfordshire EN8 0RX

Age group	3–7
Inspection date	4 February 2009
Inspection number	326560

Telephone number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: how the school is raising the reading standards of pupils to the same high levels achieved in writing, current rates of attendance and how well the school promotes community cohesion. Evidence was gathered from discussions with pupils, staff and governors and analysis of school documentation and of pupils' work. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This school is similar in size to other infant and nursery schools. Most pupils are from White British families and there are small numbers from different ethnic backgrounds. Very few speak English as an additional language. Provision is made for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage age group in Nursery and Reception classes. Children are admitted to the Nursery twice a year, in January and September. Their attainment on entry varies considerably from year to year but is often below average. Although fewer pupils than in most schools have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, this number is rising steadily each year. Their needs are mainly moderate learning difficulties or related to speech, language and communication. The school shares a site with a junior and secondary school and with the Rainbow Pre-school, which is run by a private company and reported on separately.

The school was awarded an Activemark in 2007 and 2008 for its work in promoting health and fitness.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an excellent school where pupils achieve extremely well, whatever their starting points. They make outstanding progress. This is due largely to the exceptional leadership of the headteacher who sets a clear agenda for learning and achievement. Parents are appreciative of the way she and her staff are approachable and always available to answer any concerns. Staff are carefully selected for their creative talents and their ability to operate successfully within a team. Teachers work very effectively together to plan and deliver the curriculum and ensure every child is nurtured and supported. Teachers quickly assess pupils' levels of skill, knowledge and understanding, and organise a wide range of very exciting activities that support those with moderate learning difficulties and extend those who are more able.

The newly revised curriculum has enthused pupils, who report that they thoroughly enjoy lessons and the way they are encouraged to develop their learning further at home. Parents say that the 'Wow!' events at the beginning of each topic, such as the Victorian Day and Castle Day motivate and encourage the pupils and set the tone and expectations for the term. The school has focused well on promoting pupils' understanding of different faiths, cultures and ethnicities. For example, pupils recently learned a great deal about how different members of their local community celebrate weddings. They tasted traditional Greek food and dressed up to act out an Italian ceremony. The local area is used well for visits, and visitors are always welcomed into school to share their experiences. Lessons in religious education focus on the beliefs and customs of a range of faiths very effectively so that pupils learn to respect everyone. Links are developing well with a community in the Philippines and there are clear plans also to form links with other schools in the UK to enable pupils to understand about life in different localities. However, it is less clear how school leaders will assess the success of these plans to enable them to continue to improve this aspect of its work.

It is not surprising that pupils reach above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics because they have so many opportunities to practise these skills in other subjects. In their topic on Celebrations, for example, Year 2 pupils wrote instructions on how to make a Chinese kite. In their topic on Castles, Dungeons and Dragons, Year 2 pupils wrote instructions on how to make a Chinese dragon. They also labelled pictures of dragons with adjectives such as 'fierce' and 'scary'. They wrote extended stories about their imaginary adventures in castles, using exciting vocabulary and good sentence structure. Writing has always been stronger than reading and programmes have been introduced recently to ensure pupils develop secure phonic skills earlier in their school career. Their motivation is also improving because of the increased amount of independent reading and research they are doing as part of the new home-school learning project.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their secure basic skills and high levels of independence and motivation mean they are prepared extremely well for the next phase of their education and beyond. They understand the need to keep safe and healthy, thoroughly enjoying physical education lessons and swimming lessons at the junior school. School lunches are nutritious and very well presented and adults in the hall encourage pupils to try new dishes and eat up their vegetables. The vast majority of pupils attend regularly and the new procedures to discourage term-time holidays are proving successful. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally good because adults constantly encourage the pupils to consider their own and others' feelings within a range of different situations. In assembly, for example, pupils showed extraordinary levels of maturity and understanding when they gave their ideas

about how to reach their personal goals. Thinking about Sir Edmund Hillary climbing Everest, one pupil described his 'vision' and 'courage' and how he fulfilled 'his dream'.

Teachers instil a very calm atmosphere in their classrooms that contributes successfully to pupils' exemplary behaviour and the way in which they carry out their tasks. They know exactly what is expected of them and what they have to do to achieve success. They are guided very well about how to improve their work. Teachers assess pupils' understanding carefully by asking them to assess their own learning. 'Thumbs up or thumbs down?' asked a Year 1 teacher at the end of a very well structured phonics lesson. Pupils responded thoughtfully and honestly, knowing that if they didn't understand, they would receive further help.

Teaching assistants play a very important role in helping groups and individuals who need additional support. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is extremely well organised and effective in giving them the confidence to take the next steps in their learning. Parents really appreciate this, one writing, 'The school has done their utmost to help my child, including making an individual education plan just for him and one-to-one help on a regular basis.'

Teachers and senior managers keep a close eye on pupils' progress, checking regularly to see if they are moving forward quickly enough to meet the challenging targets set for them. Prompt action is taken to support any pupils who appear to be falling behind. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and meet requirements. Regular checks are made to ensure premises are safe and secure and the headteacher and governors ensure that all necessary checks are completed when appointing new staff.

School leaders have a very clear understanding of the school's performance gained through thorough analysis of data and careful monitoring procedures. Governors play an important role in this, visiting regularly to assess the success of their plans. Very effective teamwork between the headteacher, staff and governors ensures that everyone is pulling in the same direction and means that the school has an excellent capacity to improve even more in the future. Recent improvements are seen in many aspects of the school's work, not least in the higher standards in mathematics, the exciting new curriculum and the way in which the school involves parents in their children's education. Parents fully endorse the school's work. One, echoing the views of many, wrote: 'It is great to know my children are happy, secure, enthusiastic and achieving well. When I asked my youngest what he likes about school he said 'Everything!' and as a parent, that's great to hear.'

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children make excellent progress in the Nursery and Reception classes because adults know them extremely well and cater effectively for their needs. Teaching is very well planned and ensures that children develop good levels of basic literacy and numeracy skills as well as learning how to work and play together successfully. They quickly become confident to choose activities for themselves from the excellent range provided. Nursery children, for example, cut and stuck different materials to make collages of the snow that covered their playground, while the teacher took others out to examine their footprints and search for icicles. The focus on practical first-hand activities makes learning exciting and meaningful for children. They benefit tremendously from adults' high levels of skill and enthusiasm, which motivate them and help them develop excellent attitudes to learning. Activities set at different levels of difficulty ensure that the children make very good progress, whatever their needs or capabilities.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed extremely well. All aspects of provision are monitored closely to identify what is working well and what needs to be improved. Excellent teamwork means that improvements occur seamlessly so that children can quickly benefit. Thorough induction systems ensure that children rapidly settle into school routines and that parents develop confidence and trust in school staff. Assessment systems are thorough and teachers' records, along with local authority data, show that nearly all pupils are working securely within the nationally expected goals for their learning and a considerable number exceed these.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the impact of the recent exciting work to promote community cohesion is evaluated to inform future planning.

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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?	1
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

5 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brookland Infant and Nursery School, Cheshunt, EN8 0RX

Thank you for giving us such a warm welcome when we visited your school a short while ago. We enjoyed speaking to so many of you and looking at your work. Everything we saw and heard convinced us that you go to an excellent school. We were especially impressed with the way you are all so well behaved and kind to each other. You work hard in lessons, but are always ready to help others if necessary. You are very polite to each other and to all the adults. Your school is a really happy place.

You make excellent progress and reach high standards in your work because teaching is extremely good and you are all very keen to learn. The teachers work very hard to make your lessons interesting and fun. All the work that you do at home also helps you to reach high standards. The adults in the school look after you exceptionally well. You told us that this makes you feel safe and that you can always share any concerns.

The people in charge are doing a great job in running the school. They work hard to make sure the buildings are safe and that you all receive the education you deserve. We could see from some of the photos and displays that you have had great fun learning about people's different faiths and cultures, especially of those who live in your community. Your teachers are planning to help you learn more about these by developing more links with schools in this country and overseas. We have asked them to check carefully how well these plans are going so they can ensure that you all gain a better understanding of life in other communities.

Thank you once again for being so welcoming and we wish you good luck in the future.

Yours sincerely

Mary Summers

Lead inspector