

Bracken Leas Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121947
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	327604
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Gulshanbir Kayembe

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	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	411
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	Susan Hampshire
Headteacher	Colin Gynn
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Magdalen Meadows Brackley NN13 6LF
Telephone number	01280 707050
Fax number	01280 707051

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves a market town in largely rural surroundings not far from Northampton. The large majority of pupils are White British. There are a small number from minority ethnic communities, a few of whom have English as an additional language. Although the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is above average, the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school has achieved a number of awards such as Healthy Schools, Activemark and, most recently, ICT Mark. The headteacher and deputy headteacher took up post 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: 2

Bracken Leas is a good school which provides well for its pupils. They make good progress in their learning and leave as well rounded individuals who are confident and self-assured. The strong sense of community makes a significant contribution to the pupils' sense of belonging.

Children begin the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and competencies that are broadly similar to those expected for their age. However, their writing skills are often less well developed. They make good progress in the Reception Year. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 continue to make good progress so that standards are consistently above average by the end of Year 6. Standards in mathematics, which have been lower, have now caught up with those in English and science. Pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to attain above average standards in mathematics and those in lower year groups are making consistently good progress. A focused approach to identifying and supporting lower attainers has helped to improve their progress significantly. In reading, standards are consistently high with pupils often making very good progress. Pupils' progress in writing, though good overall from their starting points, is not as consistent across the school. In some year groups, their progress, while showing secure signs of accelerating, is satisfactory rather than good. The school has focused on improving writing, but there are still insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop writing across the curriculum. In some year groups, there is not enough extended writing and pupils do not always finish their work.

Teaching is good and usually pupils are challenged well in lessons, especially the most able and those of average ability. Support staff play a significant role in supporting those who find learning difficult. Consequently, these pupils make good progress. Pupils with physical disabilities are well cared for and very effectively supported in their learning so that they are fully included in activities. A good curriculum promotes learning well and is especially strong in how it is tailored to the personal development needs of pupils. As a result, pupils' behaviour in and around the school is excellent and they have an exceptionally good understanding of what it means to live a healthy life. Pupils develop positive social and moral values and have the capacity to reflect on life's big questions. However, their understanding of the wider make-up of the UK community, in particular the cultural diversity, is less well developed. Pupils are very well cared for and looked after and this contributes well to their sense of safety and well-being. External agencies are well used to support individuals and their families. However, academic guidance is not as good. The school has put in place a system of personal targets and most pupils know what these are, but they are less secure in their understanding of how such targets will be achieved. Marking of books is regular but does not consistently tell pupils what they need to do to improve their work.

The school is led and managed well. There is a strong sense of teamwork and the headteacher and deputy headteacher provide good support to middle leaders. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and used effectively to help identify areas for development. Very good use is made of data to highlight where progress is good, to pick up patterns in achievement and identify any areas where performance is lower. Middle leaders provide sound leadership and management of their areas. A number are new to roles and are receiving good support from senior staff to develop these. Governors have good oversight of the work of the school and are very supportive of it. They are keen and active in helping to promote community cohesion. Based on the improvements secured since the previous inspection, the school has good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision is good and children make good progress as a result. Good attention to children's welfare results in their personal and social development being good. They are confident to talk about their work to adults and one another. Children share ideas and resources happily and tidy up with enthusiasm. They make good progress across all areas of learning, and their speaking and listening skills are particularly good. Standards attained at the end of 2008 were a little above average though they remained average in writing. Good teaching supports children's good progress and ensures that they are well engaged in activities that are practical and well tailored to their needs. While all areas of learning are well provided for, there are some missed opportunities for extending children's writing. The school is beginning to develop a more topic, or theme-based approach and this is helping children to make stronger links across different areas of learning. The Reception classes have good access to an outdoor area. This is well used for physical development. Its use for other areas of learning is not as well developed. Children's work is effectively assessed and there is good involvement of parents in this. Assessment information is used effectively to support learning. Overall, the Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide pupils with more opportunities for writing across the curriculum and ensure they have enough time for extended writing in literacy.
- Ensure that pupils know what to do to improve their work and to achieve their targets.
- Develop pupils' understanding of the broader UK community and the range of different people who live here.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress from the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, building on and sustaining standards that are already well on their way to being above average. Their learning develops more depth and breadth, and the quality of their ideas and thinking when working orally are often very good indeed, even by the end of Year 2. Standards are consistently above average by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Good progress continues through Years 3 to 6 so that standards are above average by the end of Year 6. In previous years, standards in mathematics have varied between average and a little above average. School data indicate it is now consistently good as pupils move through the school. Progress in writing is not as consistent. Pupils who find learning difficult and those with disabilities make good progress as do the few from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their good attendance. One Year 3 pupil described the school as being 'like a family' to her. Pupils generally participate readily in the activities provided; however, they are sometimes passive as learners because teachers talk for too long. Pupils readily take on responsibilities, making a good contribution to the school community by caring for younger pupils, acting as playground buddies and through the school council. They are enjoying their growing voice in the school and express the desire to do even more as

an ECO school to sustain the environment and help others by, for example, participating enthusiastically in the national Bag2school initiative. Pupils also enjoy raising money for a wide range of good causes. They are interested in learning about people who are different but, overall, do not have a broad enough understanding of the wide range of cultures and lifestyles within the UK.

Pupils' good social skills and skills of teamwork coupled with their good progress in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology means they are well prepared for the next step in education and their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are well planned with a clear purpose. Topics are interesting and imaginatively resourced so that pupils are eager to participate. Relationships between adults and pupils are very positive, giving pupils the confidence to explain their thoughts and feelings in discussions. Staff teamwork is a strong feature, with the skills of teaching assistants carefully planned into lessons. They play a very effective part in helping targeted groups of pupils to learn and to make good progress. Activities are well organised so that lessons run smoothly, but at times teachers talk for too long, delaying the start of practical work and limiting pupils' learning. Pupils work hard with partners or independently but are not always given enough time to finish longer pieces of writing and this restricts their progress. Occasionally, work is not matched closely enough to the needs of pupils. The best marking points out clearly what is successful and what needs improving but practice is not consistent. Pupils are not always given enough opportunities to learn from their mistakes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has successfully developed a stimulating, broadly based and relevant curriculum. Teachers are beginning to develop links between subjects, although this is at an early stage and opportunities for pupils to take initiatives in learning are missed on occasions. At times there is an overuse of worksheets that require little writing or reading for information. The scheme for personal, social, health and citizenship makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. Similarly, the school's work on ecology makes a good contribution to learning across a range of subjects. The curriculum is well tailored to the needs of pupils who find learning difficult. It is enriched through an outstanding range of experiences that are used very effectively to boost pupils' interest and learning. Year 1 produced impressive writing after visiting Warwick Castle, and a lively mural on the front of the school is the result of working with a visiting artist. French is now taught from Year 3 onwards. Very good provision for music and sport enables pupils to make a good contribution to the local community through performances and inter-school matches.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Teachers and support staff know the pupils very well and encourage them to enjoy and participate in their learning through consistent use of praise, setting clear expectations and by listening to their concerns and helping them to resolve any problems. Pupils with physical

disabilities are very well cared for. Parents are confident that their children are well supported and value the commitment of the staff, describing Bracken Leas as 'a lovely school which encourages children to care for each other'. Health and safety are promoted well and statutory checks to safeguard pupils are in place.

While the school provides good support to pupils identified as having additional needs or those with English as an additional language, academic guidance is not as well developed as the support for pupils' personal and emotional development. Many know their academic targets but not all understand what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides good leadership and works effectively with his deputy to improve progress and raise standards. There is a high emphasis on producing well- rounded individuals as well as on attaining high academic standards. Community cohesion is well promoted and is particularly effective in the school and local communities. Through its Eco and fundraising work, the school makes a real difference to the wider community, for example, by supporting a nursery in the Gambia. The school is aware, through its own self evaluation, that pupils do not have enough opportunities to learn about cultural diversity in Britain through first-hand experiences. It is actively addressing this issue. The work of the school is well monitored, especially by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Those new to management are being supported in developing their monitoring roles so that they are more involved in checking the quality of work in their areas. Governors provide a good strategic steer to the work of the school and manage finances well.

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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

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

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?	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	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bracken Leas Primary School, Brackley NN13 6LF

We enjoyed visiting your school, and talking to you. We would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome. The school gives you a good education and prepares you well for your next school. The quality of teaching and learning, curriculum and support and guidance are good because the school is well led and managed. You make good progress and reach good standards as a result.

- These are some of the best things about the school.
- You leave school as well rounded, confident and articulate young people.
- Children in Reception get a good and enjoyable start to their education.
- You make particularly good progress in reading, speaking and listening and science, and your progress in mathematics is now consistently good.
- Your behaviour is excellent and helps to make the school feel exceptionally safe and friendly.
- Staff take good care of you and make sure they work with others to help meet your individual needs.
- Your headteacher is keen for you to do well and works with the staff to make the school as good as it can be.
- There are a few things that need to be improved:
 - giving you more opportunities for writing so that you can make even better progress
 - making sure you are given good guidance on how to improve your work
 - giving you more opportunities to learn about the different cultural backgrounds of people living in Britain today.

It was very nice to meet you and we wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Gulshan Kayembe Lead inspector