

# Braintcroft Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101532
<b>Local Authority</b>	Brent
<b>Inspection number</b>	335148
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 November 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Bradley Simmons HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	657
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Shirish Kothari
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Kim Beat
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 November 2007
<b>School address</b>	Warren Road Neasden London NW2 7LL
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out at no notice by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 27 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, senior leaders, groups of pupils and a representative of the local authority. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' exercise books, school data about pupils' attainment and progress, monitoring records, safeguarding and child protection documentation, and the school improvement plan. Inspectors also considered the outcomes of a survey recently conducted by the school in which 284 questionnaires were returned to the school, representing 71% of the school's families.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether the school is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils
- the extent to which leaders at each level play their part in school improvement
- whether teaching is now consistently of sufficiently high quality to enable all pupils to make satisfactory and increasingly better progress, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.

## Information about the school

Braintcroft is a very large school, situated moments from the North Circular Road. Just over a third of its pupils are entitled to free school meals. Most of its pupils are from minority ethnic groups; many of these pupils speak English as an additional language. Around 150 pupils are refugees and/or asylum seekers. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than normally found.

At the school's last full inspection in November 2007, it was found to require special measures. A new headteacher joined the school in January 2008 and the present deputy joined in September 2008. As the school's reputation has improved, the numbers of pupils leaving or joining the school part way through each school year has decreased. Several year groups are now oversubscribed.

An after-school club is run by an outside provider. This club is inspected separately by Ofsted.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

### Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that Braintcroft Primary School no longer requires special measures. Braintcroft is an improving school that is now providing its pupils with an acceptable standard of education. The prime factor in the school's improvement has been the tenacity of the headteacher and the deputy headteacher in pursuing better teaching and learning for pupils.

Two years ago, teachers' expectations of pupils were not always high enough and teaching was inadequate overall. It has improved term by term since the last inspection and is now solidly satisfactory. Many lessons are good or better, and this is having a tangible impact on improving pupils' learning, with the result that pupils' progress is accelerating, and attainment, while remaining low overall, is rising. In many classrooms, teachers question pupils skilfully, ensuring that pupils have to think deeply and use increasingly complex spoken language. Such good questioning skills are, however, not yet a consistent feature of teaching in every class.

In the best lessons, teaching assistants are very clear about their work and make a good impact on the speed with which targeted pupils pick up new concepts. The contribution made by some teaching assistants still lacks focus because their role in securing good learning for pupils has not been sufficiently planned or clarified. Marking has improved since the last inspection. Across the school, it is workmanlike and regular, but in some cases it has not moved up a gear so that it tells pupils what they have achieved and what they need to do next. While there is no doubt that teachers' termly assessments of pupils' work against National Curriculum levels of attainment are now largely accurate, during some lessons, teachers fail to use day-to-day assessments of pupils' learning to pinpoint gaps in understanding accurately. In some cases this leads to teachers providing tasks that are ill matched to pupils' learning needs and thus pupils' progress slows.

The school has good capacity to sustain its trajectory of improvement. A new senior leadership team is embedding the initiatives of those who contributed to school improvement as senior leaders until August 2009. Middle leaders have made a good start on ensuring consistency of expectation and practice, but the newness of their role has necessarily limited their influence to date. Overall, rigorous self-evaluation has brought the school to a point where senior leaders and governors have a sharp understanding of the school's growing strengths and its remaining weaknesses, and the confidence to challenge and support each other to secure further improvement.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Refine the quality of teaching in order to raise pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by:
  - developing teachers' ability to pose probing and challenging questions that extend pupils' critical thinking and oral language skills
  - ensuring that teaching assistants are fully briefed and focused so that they can provide a better balance of support and challenge to targeted pupils
  - improving marking so that it gives clearer guidance to pupils on what they need to do to improve their work
  - ensuring that teachers' day-to-day assessments accurately pinpoint gaps in pupils' learning and understanding so that these may be more precisely addressed during lessons.
- Press ahead with the good start made to widen the influence of middle leaders and thus heighten the impact of these staff on improving outcomes for pupils.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

Pupils' learning and progress are improving; in some classrooms, this improvement is rapid. Particularly noteworthy is the new pride that pupils are taking in their work. Exercise books are now well cared for and smartly presented. Pupils are delighted when they are awarded their individual 'pen licence'. This signifies that they have attained a sufficiently high standard of handwriting to be allowed to write in pen. During lessons, inspectors saw boys and girls of all ethnicities, vulnerable pupils, and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities making progress that was consistently at least sound, and sometimes better. The school's well-organised achievement data for different groups corroborate this picture. Increasingly, pupils are showing a real enthusiasm for learning, demonstrated by an improved rate of attendance that is now in line with the national average. More tellingly, a group of pupils rushed up to an inspector in the playground, exhorting him to 'Come to our classroom. We love our teacher. All our lessons are really fun!'

Pupils say that the school is a safe place to be and are particularly appreciative of the work that has been done to improve the security of the site. Those groups of pupils with whom inspectors spoke say that there is no bullying at the school, and pupils' behaviour is certainly good ' calm and welcoming during lessons and during breaks. At lunchtimes, pupils are reassured by the high profile of senior leaders in the playground. They feel confident that teachers will deal with individual behaviour issues, but several pupils said that midday supervisors do not always take the time to investigate disputes fully.

At Braintcroft, pupils are helped to settle in quickly. Their emotional well-being is a strength and is reflected in the cheerful demeanour of pupils, a number of whom have experienced considerable turbulence in their lives before arriving at the school. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of a balanced diet and realise the importance of

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exercise in maintaining good health. Older pupils have some understanding of the dangers of substance misuse.

Pupils take their responsibilities seriously. They enjoy being school councillors and prefects. Some school councillors felt that they could be doing more to help, for example by being 'buddies' to younger children at playtimes. Pupils' understanding of community, their improving basic skills and better punctuality are laying sound foundations for their future economic well-being.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

### How effective is the provision?

Although teaching still has some areas that require attention, increasingly there are strong elements. In a growing number of lessons, teachers give pupils short, focused opportunities to discuss a problem or an issue. For example, in an outstanding geography lesson for a Year 3 class, the teacher used a pupil to demonstrate the type of discussion she wanted other pupils to emulate in order to elicit the main features of urban and rural areas from each other. She ensured that pupils spoke in full sentences, so that they had to think hard about the language they were using, and challenged

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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them to give better answers when she felt that they had not thought sufficiently deeply. Such high expectations are starting to become the norm at Braintcroft; one Year 5 pupil said to an inspector, 'Miss pushes us a lot so we make loads of progress.'

The school is providing an appropriate curriculum for its pupils. It is broad but judiciously geared to improving pupils' basic skills. Where possible, elements of subjects are delivered through topics. These are satisfactorily planned but, understandably, given the school's need to nail down quicker progress and better assessment for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics, do not yet systematically assure progression in skills and concepts in subjects beyond these. Each year group undertakes a visit each term to a place of interest to support their learning. Some extra-curricular clubs are offered, but the range is, as yet, narrow. Pupils in the same year group now receive equality of access to the different elements of the curriculum regardless of whose class they are in. This is a substantial improvement on the position found immediately after the last full inspection.

The school provides a secure safety net for those pupils who are vulnerable. They receive sound support and a watchful eye is kept on them. The school harnesses external help promptly to bolster its own expertise. New arrivals are welcomed and reassured by pupils and staff, so they settle quickly and make a positive start. Systems for monitoring provision for, and the progress of, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are strong. However, initial assessments of newly-arrived pupils who speak English as an additional language are currently less rigorous.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>3</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have successfully focused the whole school on improvement. They have inspired the staff, who now strive to perform at the top of their game and show ambition for their pupils. Information on pupils' progress has become increasingly robust and has been used effectively as a performance management tool to demonstrate the potential of pupils to some teachers whose expectations were too low. The school's concentration on analysing the performance of different groups and then acting to narrow any performance gaps between groups is just one testimony to its success in promoting equality and tackling discrimination.

Governors are well organised. The committed chair now leads a group of dedicated volunteers, to whom he is able to delegate and who are not afraid to ask difficult

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questions and make suggestions for improvement. Governors, parents and staff have been involved in devising a coherent school improvement plan which now forms the basis for school improvement work.

Procedures to ensure that pupils are adequately safeguarded are secure. All adults who come into contact with children at the school are rigorously checked. All staff have had appropriate child protection training, and senior leaders and governors have attended training on safer recruitment. Health and safety checks are suitably rigorous and lead to appropriate action. However, despite the best efforts of the school and local authority to improve the appearance and fabric of the building, it has simply become ill-suited to 21st century primary education.

The school has undertaken an audit to ascertain the nature of the community it serves, and has a plan in place to develop pupils' understanding about communities beyond the urban environment in which they live. At school level, community cohesion is good; the pleasure which different groups of pupils take in each other's company is obvious. In addition, the work that the school has undertaken to build bridges with different groups of parents has been very strong. Parents now feel well informed and included.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

**Early Years Foundation Stage**

Children make satisfactory progress during their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The nursery has been transformed over the past year and is now making good provision for both the morning and afternoon groups of children. The nursery curriculum is securely rooted in all six areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum.



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Planning is effectively focused on learning objectives for children, rather than simply listing activities they will undertake. Practitioners are well organised and make the most of the time they spend with the children, posing judiciously considered questions to extend children's thinking, speaking and listening skills. The outdoor provision in the Nursery is now a strength of the provision, reflecting the full curriculum and providing children with effective and well-planned opportunities to broaden and deepen their learning. During the inspection, the outdoors was, however, not consistently accessible for children.

Reception classes, too, have improved since the previous inspection although, here, provision is solidly satisfactory rather than good. This is because individual practitioners in Reception sometimes miss opportunities to intervene with a well-chosen question or comment which will accelerate children's learning. Good strides have been made in the teaching and assessment of early reading, including systematic phonics, although a number of staff changes in September have necessitated a re-sharpening of this essential area. Outdoor provision for Reception classes remains a work in progress rather a consistent and integral part of provision.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

## Views of parents and carers

Parents' questionnaires are not normally distributed for monitoring inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so. The school has recently conducted a survey asking parents about their opinions on a range of matters. The results of this survey are extremely positive. Every parent who returned this survey believes that their child enjoys school. In addition, the overwhelming majority of parents consider that the school expects their child to do his or her best and agree that the school informs them about their child's progress. Several parents' responses noted a desire for more extra-curricular activities. The inspection team agrees that provision in this area is narrow because, until now, the school has necessarily and rightly been focused on improving pupils' learning during the core school day.

## **Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire**

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



3 December 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Braintcroft Primary School, London, NW2 7LL

Thank you so much for the welcome you gave me and my colleagues when we visited your school last week. Many of you will know that I have visited your school every term since April 2008. I have been doing this to check that the school has been improving for you. This is the first time that I have written to you after one of my visits. I'm doing this because your school no longer needs to be visited by me. It has improved greatly and is now providing you with a satisfactory education, largely because of the very hard work of your headteacher and deputy headteacher to make things better for you, but also because of the way that all the adults and children at Braintcroft have really thrown themselves into the big effort to make things better.

Many of your lessons are now good, and some are outstanding, and these lessons are really helping you to make much quicker progress and to reach higher standards in your reading, writing and mathematics. In these lessons you really work hard because you enjoy the teaching so much. I know that you would like all lessons to be like this, so I've asked your teachers to make sure that they ask you questions which really make you think hard and use more 'wow' words and difficult phrases when you answer them. Some of the teachers' marking which I saw in your books is very good. It tells you really clearly what you have done well, and what you need to do to improve your work. I would like all marking to be as good as this, so I've asked your teachers to improve this. Sometimes during lessons, we noticed that the work teachers give some of you is a little too easy, or sometimes too difficult. I have asked your teachers to make very sure that they know where the gaps are in your knowledge and understanding, so that they can plan lessons which teach you the things you need to know next at just the right level for you. It will be very important for you to think very carefully when your teacher asks you if you have understood something you have just been taught. If you are not sure whether you understand, don't be afraid to say so!

I have really enjoyed my visits and will really miss coming to Braintcroft School. Keep on taking pride in your work and striving to do your best!

I wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Bradley Simmons  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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