

Brickhouse Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103936
Local Authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	336198
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Edward Wheatley

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 of pupils on the school roll	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Phil Matthews
Headteacher	Mr Paul Newby
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. About 60% of inspectors' time during school time was spent looking at learning activities; 17 lessons or parts of lessons were seen and eight teachers observed. Meetings were held with pupils, staff, governors, visitors to the school and local authority staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at planning, self-evaluation and 12 parental questionnaires.

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

- the effects of efforts to raise achievement, and particularly how well teaching has contributed to this
- how well all staff with management responsibilities check the quality of the school's work and push through challenging priorities for improvement
- the effectiveness of efforts to reduce absence
- how effectively and quickly improvements in the Nursery and Reception classes have been introduced.

Information about the school

Brickhouse is a small school. The great majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. English is the most commonly spoken language and a very small number speak Armenian or Polish as their first language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, but varies between year groups. The majority of these pupils have moderate learning or speech difficulties and a small number have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

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

This is a satisfactory school. It is improving rapidly after a drop in standards and achievement in the most recent end-of-key-stage assessments. Attainment is broadly average and there is a swell of rising standards moving through the school. Progress is satisfactory overall and improving. In many classes progress is good and all groups of pupils now make similar progress. Attainment in Year 6 suffers from a history of inadequate teaching in previous years, an issue that has now been resolved. While not all pupils have fully caught up, they are well on their way to doing so. Standards in writing and progress in science are a little slower than in other subjects. In the Early Years Foundation Stage children's progress is satisfactory and improving rapidly under new leadership.

The great majority of pupils behave well and they are considerate of each other's feelings. They feel safe and move around sensibly in the buildings. They have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy diet and physical exercise. Pupils' contributions to the community are satisfactory. The school council takes an active part in school life and playground buddies are valued by other children. Pupils' good social skills and sound progress in developing literacy and numeracy skills mean that they are adequately prepared for later life and the next stage of their education.

Very good relationships contribute significantly to pupils' enjoyment of learning. In the best lessons, work is challenging and well matched to pupils' needs, and the pace is fast. Most, but not all, pupils know how well they are doing and what the next steps in learning are because teachers tell them and marking reinforces this. However, teachers do not consistently check to make sure pupils have followed advice given when they mark work. Teaching is improving but there are too few opportunities for pupils to work creatively or independently, to carry out investigations or to write at length.

Occasionally, notably in science, work is not as well matched to pupils' individual needs as it is in literacy and numeracy. The curriculum has a strength in the personal, social and health education programme, helping to promote pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Links between subjects are good and business enterprise is one area where creativity and independence are well promoted. The range of out-of-school activities is sound with a high level of take-up.

The quality of personal care and support is good, and especially so for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or who need social or emotional support. Efforts to improve attendance have been successful although there is a small amount of persistent absence, despite the school's hard work. Bullying and racism are dealt with well and well understood by pupils.

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The headteacher provides clear direction for improvement. Changes in staffing have strengthened leadership and there is a real grasp of what the school needs to do to improve further. Improvement is evident in most areas of the school's work. Governors provide considerable support and set challenging targets for the school. The school has sound links with parents and carers and works hard to improve these further, starting with good links in the Nursery and Reception classes. Partnerships with agencies to support the education and welfare of different groups of pupils are good. Efforts to promote community cohesion are satisfactory and the school has some sound links on which it can build.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in writing and science by providing regular opportunities for pupils to:
 - engage in independent learning tasks
 - initiate their own investigations and problem solving activities
 - produce extended writing for a range of audiences and purposes.
- Improve all teaching to the standard of the best seen by:
 - ensuring pupils know their targets and how to reach them
 - checking that pupils follow the guidance given in marking
 - matching work more closely to the different learning needs of pupils.
- Improve attendance of those pupils who are persistently absent by working closely with families and pupils, with the support of specialist agencies.
- About 40% of schools whose effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

The quality of learning observed was generally good. Standards are rising and progress improving as assessment information is used more effectively to plan work that is more closely matched to pupils' needs, and the work seen in lessons and pupils' books was broadly average. Underperformance by individual pupils and groups of pupils is identified quickly and dealt with effectively through tailored support or different resources and learning activities. This approach is having a positive impact on literacy and numeracy overall. However, the effect on writing has been limited because of the restricted opportunities to write freely and imaginatively. The slightly slower progress in science, evident in pupils' written work, is because work is not always matched to learning needs and presents too few opportunities for pupils to plan and conduct their own scientific investigations. Sound support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensures they make the same progress as other pupils.

Pupils enjoy learning and it is rarely disrupted by poor behaviour. Pupils know bullying happens and a few pupils spoken to have experienced it themselves. However, they are

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confident it is dealt with well by adults. Pupils work and play together well, readily help each other and are sympathetic to those pupils who are worried or upset. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and their understanding of the values and beliefs of cultures other than their own are sound. Most pupils eat healthily and take part in some sort of physical activity. Pupils are willing to take on responsibilities and carry them out well, especially in school, though not so extensively in the wider community. Nevertheless, they raise funds for charity, notably for the recent earthquake in Haiti.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Pupils enjoy their lessons and work hard because, typically, lessons are fast paced, full of interesting activities and carefully matched to pupils' needs based on accurate assessment. Very good relationships in lessons lead to pupils feeling free to contribute their own ideas confidently, and this aids their learning. Most pupils know what to do to improve their work and marking gives them a clear picture of how well they are doing and what they need to do next. However, in some lessons work is not always matched

¹ 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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closely enough to learning needs, pupils are not always clear on how to make further progress and teachers do not check whether the guidance they give is followed.

The curriculum is improving. Efforts to make it relevant to pupils' needs and to engage their interest are successfully contributing to rising standards. Links between subjects are good although opportunities for independent learning and creativity are not so well developed. The personal, social and health education programme is very successful in promoting pupils' social and emotional development. Physical exercise is promoted well and the school has the Activemark PE award. Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for the few pupils who speak English as an additional language is improving and contributing well to the better progress made by these pupils. Pastoral care is particularly good, especially for vulnerable pupils, and benefits from the good links with local authority support services. Pupils feel secure because they know that school cares about them and they are confident in turning to any adult for help. The links within the school and with secondary schools ensure smooth transfer between different stages of education. The school works hard to improve attendance. It has been mostly successful, except with a small number of pupils and families.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, well supported by all staff, is driving improvements in teaching, assessment and the curriculum which are leading to improvements in pupils' progress. The gaps in progress between different groups of pupils are narrowing rapidly and the school promotes equal opportunities well. The issues from the previous inspection have been dealt with successfully and the capacity for further improvement is good. Governors have a thorough knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and provide effective challenge for the school through monitoring and questioning actions taken. At the time of the inspection safeguarding requirements were met.

Links with parents are satisfactory and the school works hard to improve them. Recent work in the Early Years Foundation Stage has increased parental involvement and is intended to have a continuing effect as pupils move through the school. Procedures to promote community cohesion are at an early stage but are prudently based on existing good practice and the school's awareness of how it needs to improve in this area.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

From low starting points children make sound overall progress across the areas of learning. Recent improvements are leading to improving progress. Some of these improvements, for example the introduction of phonics and additional numeracy activities, are not yet fully embedded. Nevertheless, improving progress is evident in the development of language and mathematics skills, and progress is good in personal, social and emotional development. The nursery and reception class children play and work together well. They enjoy learning, behave well and they concentrate and work independently. Adults are attentive, listen to the children and create conditions in which children feel welcomed, safe and secure, so that there is a seamless transition from parental to school care. Adults are patient and sensitive to children's needs, but also challenge children and are insistent on children speaking properly and behaving well. The indoor environment is stimulating and the school has prioritised further development of the outside area. The curriculum provides a broad experience across the six areas of learning. Planning is detailed so that all adults know and understand their key role in the various activities.

New, effective leadership and management have led to improvements in provision and in the progress that children make. There are good links with parents and these are fostered by encouraging parents to contribute to learning journals. There is a developing sense of common purpose and good capacity for further improvement.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

In the small number of questionnaires returned, parents' views were almost entirely positive. A very small number of parents were concerned that children in Year 6 were repeating work they had covered earlier. Given that Year 6 pupils had fallen behind, inspectors felt this was necessary to reinforce previous work done.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Brickhouse Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 12 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 210 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	6	50	5	42	1	8	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	7	58	5	42	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	4	33	7	58	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	3	25	8	67	1	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	3	25	8	67	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	5	42	6	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	5	42	7	58	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	3	25	6	50	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	6	50	5	42	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	6	50	6	50	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	5	42	6	50	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	7	58	5	42	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	6	50	5	42	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



1 March 2010

Dear pupils

Inspection of Brickhouse Primary School, Rowley Regis, B65 8HS

Thank you for making us so welcome. We spoke to many of you and you gave us a good idea about what you think about school. We judged the school to be satisfactory, which means it does some things well but needs to improve some areas.

You make satisfactory progress overall but it is improving throughout the school, including in Nursery and Reception.

The headteacher, staff and governors are working hard to make sure that improvements continue, so that you do even better.

Some teaching is good and it is improving all the time, but there are a few areas where it needs to improve further.

You enjoy school and learning. You behave well and get on very well together. You listen to each other and treat everyone with respect and consideration.

You understand the importance of having a healthy lifestyle and most of you eat healthily and take part in the physical activities the school provides.

You take on responsibilities seriously and carry them out well.

The school takes good care of you, and makes sure that you always have someone you can turn to for help.

The school is safe place, and you feel safe in the buildings and grounds.

In order for the school to be even better, we have asked your teachers and governors to do three things.

Improve your progress, by making sure you have opportunities to work independently, to try out your own ideas and problems, and to widen the range of writing tasks you do.

Make all teaching as good as the best by always matching work to your particular learning needs, and making sure you know what the next steps in learning are and that you follow guidance given.

Work closely with those pupils who are often absent and their families to make sure their attendance improves.

You can help by always following advice given by teachers when they mark your work,

and by asking if you are not sure how to improve your work.

Yours sincerely

Edward Wheatley

Lead inspector

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