

Breachwood Green Junior Mixed and Infant

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117119
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	338953
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Maxine Clewlow

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	108
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Elisabeth Greet
Headteacher	Rosemarie Bethel
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors spent the large majority of their time observing learning, observing four lessons and four teachers and sampling lessons throughout the school. Meetings were held with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work and looked at the school's documentation relating to safeguarding, its improvement plans, reports on the school's work, governors' minutes, records of pupils' progress and analysed 41 parental questionnaires.

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

- the achievement of different groups of pupils, including boys and the more able pupils, to determine the effectiveness and impact of teaching on their progress
- the quality of teaching, in particular the use of assessment information to improve pupil's learning
- the quality of the school's leadership and management and its capacity to deliver improvements, particularly for the leadership of the broader curriculum, not just the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.

Information about the school

This village school is much smaller than most primary schools, with pupils taught in four mixed-age classes. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and most pupils come from Breachwood Green. A few pupils travel from neighbouring towns. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average overall; however this is not balanced across the school with some year groups having much larger proportions. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is much lower than average. There is a supervised breakfast and after school club.

The school has attained the Healthy Schools Standard, Activemark, FA Charter Mark and a range of local sporting awards and achievements.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school where pupils achieve outstanding outcomes. Pupils are happy, confident and considerate. They value their village community and work together very well indeed. Their behaviour is exemplary and their outstanding attendance is an indication that pupils enjoy coming to school. Much of pupils' personal development is outstanding because the school takes excellent care of everyone and gives them outstanding support and guidance. The dedication of school leaders has resulted in this small school providing a wealth of opportunities. This has led to good achievement and outstanding outcomes. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are particularly well cared for and make excellent progress. Every effort is made to meet their needs and outstanding partnerships ensure that these pupils have support that is matched very well to their individual needs.

Pupils' starting points vary from average to above average and teachers are challenged to meet the needs of every pupil with classes of mixed year groups. They do this well and pupils make good progress from their starting points with a majority reaching standards that are above average. In the lessons seen, Year 5 and 6 pupils are now racing ahead as a result of some innovative teaching and exemplary use of assessment. Teaching quality across the school is variable and this outstanding practice is yet to be shared fully. Pupils do best when teaching has good pace and the curriculum allows them to explore and investigate. For example, Year 5 and 6 pupils were inspired by a poetry lesson which resulted in enthusiastic and quality drama performances. Opportunities for pupils to write at length are limited, particularly in subjects other than English. While the school has embraced the use of targets, in some classes pupils are not clear about how to improve their work. Marking is not always precise and does not inspire pupils to make changes to their work.

This school has good capacity to improve. It has tackled the issues raised at the last inspection effectively and the larger leadership team is now having a positive impact. Subject leadership is shared more evenly and detailed improvement plans review actions and identify developments. Outcomes have improved and self-evaluation accurately pinpoints the school's strengths and what it needs to do next. School leaders have focused on improving teaching by having good procedures for tracking pupils' progress. This is helping teachers to understand the levels of attainment for each pupil. Lesson observation by senior leaders does not always focus sufficiently on the pace of pupils' progress in each lesson and outstanding practice is yet to be shared. The school may be small but it has worked determinedly to be 'large' in the community and its links with local partnerships have improved the school's provision.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is at least good and that an increasing proportion is outstanding by:
 - having a clear focus on the pace of pupils' progress when the headteacher and senior leaders monitor lessons
 - developing assessment for learning so that teachers understand standards clearly and that all pupils know how to improve their work
 - giving opportunities for the outstanding practice to be shared
 - developing consistent strategies across the school.
- Develop an innovative curriculum which will create more frequent opportunities for all pupils to write at length and develop subject opportunities in which pupils can investigate, explore and become independent learners.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

While overall outcomes are outstanding, pupil's achievement is good. Pupils' skills and understanding improve quickly because they enjoy being at school, feel safe and the teaching is good. Regardless of their starting points, pupils make good progress and, in many cases, exceed the targets set for them. Good teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants ensures that pupils are helped with their learning. Standards at the end of Year 6 are above average. More able pupils are beginning to be challenged by the more open-ended curriculum approaches being taken in the upper class. Boys were seen in lessons to be motivated and enthusiastic learners, particularly where teaching was strong. In these lessons, all pupils are starting to develop independent learning skills. The school is not complacent and, with improved target tracking and more accurate teacher assessments, staff are beginning to monitor progress more carefully. Pupils are enthusiastic about school and the sense of enjoyment is very marked. They participate in a broad range of activities inside and outside school. Many pupils are very proud of their achievements in sport and in the local and national competitions. The Healthy Schools Standard and Activemark and FA Charter Mark gives pupils opportunities to take regular exercise, compete in sport and learn about healthy living. This they do with enthusiasm and they demonstrate an outstanding awareness of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. One child said, 'We are incredibly healthy and sporty and enter lots of competitions, which is great.' Pupils strive hard to be a part of their school community and go out of their way to help others. Older pupils look out for younger members of their school. For example, in the playground Year 6 pupils voluntarily organise games for the younger children and in the well-run breakfast club pupils of all ages play very well together. Pupils in this school have an excellent appreciation of the importance of their involvement in their village community and yet understand that they have a role to play in the wider community. Through the school council, which is the whole school, the pupils decide for themselves which charities to support. School council

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leaders then present this democratic decision to the headteacher for approval.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is good with instances of outstanding practice. Strengths in teaching include:

- the use of strategies to promote speaking and listening, for example 'talking partners'
- the setting of work that is finely tuned to meet the needs of all pupils in these mixed age classes
- regular opportunities to assess learning throughout the lesson
- open-ended tasks which allow pupils to explore and investigate.

Weaker features of teaching include the tendency for teachers to talk for too long and this limits the amount of time for pupils to progress their own skills. The pace of learning slows and opportunities for sustained concentration are reduced. Not all teachers are fully confident with using the good assessment data to plan for the next steps in learning.

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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The curriculum is enriched by a good range of sporting opportunities, and specialist teaching in French, music and art has improved pupils' standards in these subjects. Themed days and regular visitors strengthen curriculum provision by making subjects more relevant and broadening pupils' understanding of the world. Pupils enjoy participating in competitions and local sporting partnerships and the school has achieved much success. These opportunities have enriched the curriculum and give pupils the opportunity to regularly participate in the wider community. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, children achieve high scores in knowledge and understanding of the world. In lessons, assemblies and in discussions, pupils throughout the school show that they have a thirst for knowledge by asking questions and sharing their discoveries. Subjects are taught from a curriculum which is broad and balanced; however, it restricts opportunities for these articulate pupils to explore, investigate and develop independent learning skills. The current curriculum is teacher-initiated and is not flexible enough to allow pupils to make choices and lead their own learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Although the school is small, the considerable strengths in the leadership and management stem from a team approach. Leaders are committed to making learning more effective and the recent changes to the leadership structure are beginning to have a positive impact. Progress is accelerating, although the school has not always had the continuity in staffing or the systems to ensure that assessment is accurate and realistic. With sharper assessment procedures, teachers and leaders are now regularly tracking the progress of pupils.

The headteacher has successfully engaged the governors in the work of the school and governance has clearly improved since the last inspection. The governing body is both supportive and questioning, holding the school to account in a productive way. Governors' involvement in the monitoring of safeguarding procedures demonstrates their commitment to their school community. At the time of inspection, the school could demonstrate outstanding procedures for safeguarding pupils, with exemplary policies and procedures, not only in place but regularly monitored, evaluated and updated. Strong and effective systems now track progress and the leadership of the special educational needs coordinator ensures that the provision for these pupils is outstanding. The school promotes equal opportunities exceptionally well with the careful tracking of

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pupils' progress and appropriate support programmes put in place if pupils fall behind. The promotion of community cohesion is good. Leaders have a good understanding of their school context and have planned imaginative opportunities and activities to broaden the understanding of pupils about the communities and cultures of the United Kingdom and the world. As a result, pupils show respect, are enquiring and want to learn about other cultures and religions. All pupils are encouraged to be active members of the village community and the inclusive school council includes every child in some decision-making.

Parents and carers hold the school in high regard and quite rightly so. The school works hard to involve parents at every stage of their children's journeys through school. One parent commented in their questionnaire, 'The school has given an excellent start in life to the children. Excellent staff and the headmistress goes way beyond the call of duty.'

These are the grades for leadership and management

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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enjoy being in class 1 because learning is fun and there are a wealth of interesting activities in the classroom and in the outside learning area. A major strength is the way adults play and communicate with children so that there are challenging activities and lots of talk. From their varied starting points, and with Year 1 pupils also in this mixed age class, the teacher plans a variety of opportunities for children to solve problems and find things out for themselves. The classroom is organised well with clearly identified learning areas for children to learn independently or with adult guidance. Opportunities for learning are sometimes missed during periods when the children are tidying up, moving around or getting ready for their next tasks. Children

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make good progress in all areas of learning with some children making big steps against their learning goals. They settle quickly to a busy school life, developing good relationships with adults and other children. The children benefit from the caring ethos of the school with older pupils regularly being role models. Older pupils routinely show great thought and sensitivity towards these younger children and as a result the children are confident and feel very safe.

Adults have a good knowledge about how children learn and make good records of their observations of the children at play. This informs the planning for the children's next steps in their learning. Support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is excellent. The positive relationships that the school has made with support agencies contribute to the high quality support. Parents are given good information to help them support their children's learning. The setting is well led and managed.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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

The large majority of parents are entirely satisfied with the school and praise many aspects of its work. Parents say teaching is good and that their children are happy. They praise the staff, commenting that they are helpful and show great commitment. Parents feel lucky to have a village school and congratulate its staff for providing the wealth of sports, music and cultural opportunities. Parents interviewed before school commented on the warm and caring ethos and the 'open door' which enables them to follow up concerns at any time. They feel that the teachers are approachable and that matters are dealt with effectively. Very few concerns were raised in the questionnaires but these were brought to the attention of the headteacher. The school also routinely surveys parents and takes their views into account; this is appreciated by a few parents.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Breachwood Green Junior Mixed and Infant 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 41 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 108 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	80	8	20	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	83	7	18	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	27	68	10	25	3	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	70	11	28	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	30	73	9	22	2	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	58	17	43	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	70	11	28	1	3	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)	25	63	14	35	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	63	14	34	0	0	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	26	63	14	34	0	0	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	61	14	37	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	34	85	6	15	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	33	83	7	18	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.



21 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Breachwood Green Junior Mixed and Infant, Hitchin, SG4 8NP

Thank you so much for helping us when we came to inspect your school recently. We enjoyed meeting so many of you and observing you at work and play. You made us feel very welcome and we would like to thank you for speaking so clearly about your school. I really enjoyed eating lunch with you and I listened to what you had to say about your learning and your teachers.

You go to a good school where you enjoy learning and taking part in many activities. You clearly enjoy coming to school because your attendance is outstanding; well done. You make good progress and reach standards that are above average because you are taught well and lessons are interesting and fun. Your behaviour is extremely good and you have an excellent understanding about how to be healthy and how to stay safe. Your contribution to the life of your village community is excellent and I commend the positive differences you are making through your school council charity events.

Teachers work hard to help you learn so that you really enjoy school. Your headteacher knows what to do to make the school even better. To help you make more progress, we have asked the school to do two things:

- to improve the teaching so that you are more involved in your learning and that you know how to improve your work
- to make your curriculum more exciting by giving you tasks that allow you to explore, investigate and become confident independent learners.

You can play your part by getting involved in the new opportunities and listening to what your teachers tell you about how to improve your work.

Yours sincerely

Maxine Clewlow

Lead inspector

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