

Brockswood Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117349
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	338993
Inspection dates	22–23 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Peter Clifton

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	126
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Smith
Headteacher	Vicky Parsey
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons and observed seven teachers. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff and pupils. Inspectors talked to pupils in lessons and at break times. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation including development planning, recent monitoring reports, safeguarding procedures and pupils' books. They analysed 19 responses to the parents' questionnaire and took account of the views of parents and carers when they spoke to them during the inspection.

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

- the current picture of learning and progress, especially for boys
- how successfully leaders are raising standards across the school and improving writing
- how well provision has been improved, particularly to cater for those who need additional support, to promote higher levels of attainment and provide opportunities for pupils to apply their skills
- how successfully the school has worked with families to reduce persistent absence and improve attendance.

Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average primary school with six classes. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The majority of pupils are of White British origin with the next largest group being of Black or Black British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Their main difficulties relate to language and communication. An average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a separate Reception class which has its own dedicated outdoor learning area. An Education Improvement Partnership has been established involving joint working arrangements with another school. A new headteacher, who is currently working in the school as part of the senior leadership team, has been appointed to take over in September 2010.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in pupils' attainment, achievement and attendance.

Since the previous inspection, the school has faced a number of difficulties that have led to a sharp decline in attainment, which is now low. In September 2009, a new leadership team was established to improve attainment and learning. The team quickly identified the schools' strengths and weaknesses and took firm action to improve pupils' engagement in their learning and the quality of teaching. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' behaviour and progress are now satisfactory. However, achievement remains inadequate because expectations have been too low. Teaching is not consistently good enough to raise attainment to beyond its low level. Nevertheless, the school is demonstrating satisfactory capacity to improve. Leaders are successfully implementing a well-thought-out plan to promote further improvement and pupils' progress is now satisfactory in lessons.

Pupils are very energetic in playtimes and understand the importance of eating healthily. There are good opportunities for them to take on responsibility. Most pupils have responded well to current higher expectations for working hard and behaving well and relationships across the school are positive. In some lessons, the pupils' good behaviour makes a strong contribution to learning. However, in other lessons pupils, particularly boys, are passive and require support and prompting to keep them focussed on their work and engaged. This occasionally stems from introductions that are too long. Pupils acknowledge improvements and comment that they are now doing much better. Children make a satisfactory start in Reception. However, activities occasionally lack purpose and there are sometimes too few challenging activities, particularly in early writing and the use of number.

While teaching is satisfactory, the use of assessment and planning to meet the different abilities of pupils is not yet consistent enough to promote good learning. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because they are given extra support in class. The school's programme to provide one-to-one support to improve basic reading skills is showing good results. The use of talk as a starting point is helping to encourage the pupils to write but is not yet embedded across the school. Currently, pupils' weak basic skills in reading, writing and using number are a barrier to learning and as a result, their preparation for secondary education remains inadequate. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to learn independently through

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investigation and problem solving. Attendance is low and this is adversely affecting their achievement. On too many occasions, pupils miss valuable learning opportunities, and analysis of attendance data is not always rigorous enough to identify how to move forward. The headteacher has introduced measures to address absence, including reward schemes and home visits but these have yet to show sufficient impact on improving attendance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the large majority of teaching is good or better by:
 - matching provision closely to the individual needs of pupils
 - ensuring introductions are brisk and actively involve pupils in their learning
 - ensuring that activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage are purposeful and challenging.
 - Improve the curriculum to promote active learning by:
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to develop independence in learning through applying basic skills in problem solving and investigation
 - developing the use of speaking and listening activities in different subjects, particularly to help with writing.
 - Improve attendance through:
 - more rigorous analysis of attendance data to target actions more specifically
 - working even more closely with families whose children do not attend on a regular enough basis.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

Pupils' achievement and outcomes are inadequate and levels of attainment are not improving quickly enough. However, learning in all lessons observed by inspectors was at least satisfactory and sometimes good. This, together with the evidence from the samples of pupil's work, confirms that learning and progress are now satisfactory and improving. Learning is not better because the match of work to pupils' needs is not always precise enough. During the inspection there were examples of better learning when activities were demanding; for example in mathematics the teacher modelled how to solve a simple algebra problem and then gave time for pupils to work out the answers for themselves. The current Year 6 pupils' work and tracking information show that their attainment is low. Attendance is too low, particularly for a small minority of pupils who are persistently absent. A small proportion of pupils also miss learning time because they are taken on holiday in term time. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are given sound support and make similar progress to their peers.

Pupils say the school is friendly and that they always have someone to play with. They comment that there are now much better procedures for dealing with behaviour and it is

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now 'rare' for them to lose 'golden time' (when they can choose activities for themselves). Pupils comment that they feel safe in school. However, some have found staff changes unsettling. Pupils socialise together well at play times. One pupil commented that they always have carrots and vegetables at lunchtime and unhealthy snacks are not allowed. Pupils are proud of their school and happily take on extra responsibilities, for example, as playground buddies and raising money for charities. Older pupils know that drugs can be good as well as bad and recognise the dangers of smoking and drinking alcohol. They say they feel valued because they are listened to by leaders.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is promoting satisfactory learning across the school. Relationships in lessons are positive. Teachers ask pertinent questions to help the pupils clarify their thinking and the majority of pupils readily respond and engage in discussion. A few pupils, particularly boys, are reluctant learners. However, they are provided with good support by teaching assistants which enables them to keep focussed on their work. On occasion

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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teachers encourage pupils to discuss their ideas with a partner but pupils are sometimes passive learners because they have to sit on the carpet for too long, questioning is not adapted to their different needs, and there are limited opportunities for them to investigate and solve problems. Opportunities for pupils to assess each other's work are successfully raising expectations in writing. Sound marking through the use of 'three stars and a wish' helps them to understand what they need to do to improve.

Some recent changes to the curriculum are having a good impact on pupils' attitudes and progress, including themed science days that make learning more interesting. The school ran extended provision during the Easter holidays for pupils in Year 6. One pupil wrote to the school to say how beneficial this had been. The school has broadened the curriculum to ensure it is more effective and relevant in meeting the needs of different groups of pupils. Numeracy and information and communication technology skills are used satisfactorily across the curriculum. Pupils appreciate the good range of after-school clubs and opportunities to take part in extra sport.

The school has forged good links with most parents. However, despite using newsletters to promote good attendance, there has not been sufficient impact on a small minority in encouraging them to send their children to school more regularly. Leaders have been successful in improving pupils' behaviour. Pupils say there has been a big improvement recently in how their achievements are celebrated. They comment that they get a prize if their names go in the golden book for good work or behaviour. The school runs an extended programme to help pupils integrate successfully into their next school. Leaders have a satisfactory understanding of the needs of those pupils who are made vulnerable because of their circumstances, including those who are looked after and some with language and communication difficulties. This is improving because leaders are taking positive and determined steps to meet pupils' different needs through forging partnerships with a range of agencies.

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	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The Education Improvement Partnership is very beneficial and there is now a shared vision among senior leaders and staff and systems in place to move forward. This has enabled the school to improve the quality of teaching, the curriculum and pupils' progress so that these are now satisfactory. The school's system for tracking the progress of pupils is providing clear and up-to-date information. Pupils from different

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groups are now monitored carefully; provision to secure equal opportunities and tackle discrimination for all pupils is satisfactory. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and action taken subsequently are helping to improve the learning of pupils. However, while all these changes are improving provision, they are not yet embedded consistently enough to raise attainment significantly from its low level.

The governing body ensures that the pupils and staff have a safe working environment. They are aware of the areas which need to be improved and are increasingly challenging leaders about the quality of provision. They have had considerable success in improving links with parents through regular monthly events. Parents take up opportunities to join in with clubs and other activities to work alongside their children.

There are clear policies and procedures to keep pupils safe and secure. All the necessary child protection checks for staff are in place and training is up-to-date. The school has developed an effective programme to promote community cohesion but engagement with the wider national community and international links are at an early stage of development. The school council has been active in developing an equality policy which is helping to promote positive relationships.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
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	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start school with knowledge and skills that are below age-related expectations. They make satisfactory progress across the different areas of learning.

In lessons, they learn about different shapes and are beginning to describe their properties accurately. When reading together with an adult, some children readily

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engage and a few use their skills and knowledge of letter sounds to enable them to read words. However a few with weaker skills and boys in particular, quickly lose interest. They play happily and safely together. Ride-on toys and tricycles are much enjoyed in the outside area, particularly by the boys.

Planning to meet children's different needs is satisfactory but it is not sharp enough to ensure that they make better progress. Opportunities are missed to use purposeful play to promote basic skills, including writing and number. In the outside area, for example, the children offer ice creams but do not use 'money' to buy and sell them. Resources are good. For instance, the role-play hospital area is well set up and equipped.

Leaders know what needs to be done to strengthen provision. Records of children's work show that they are making satisfactory progress. However, assessment information is not used fully in planning to provide targeted activities that meet the differing needs of the children.

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	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Responses from the minority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires reflect a positive view of the school. About a third of the questionnaires included comments. Those expressing some concern mostly reflected dissatisfaction with the past rather than the present. One questionnaire, for example, referred to constant staff changes over the past two years but satisfaction with the current arrangements. Positive comments noted that the school is a welcoming place with helpful and caring staff, and inspectors endorse this view. Evidence gained from discussion with parents, members of the governing body and staff indicates a good level of support for the work of the school and regular communication including through newsletters and text messages.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Brockwood 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 19 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 126 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	8	42	11	58	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	12	63	7	37	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	11	58	6	32	2	11	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	6	32	11	58	0	0	1	5
The teaching is good at this school	7	37	10	53	2	11	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	8	42	9	47	2	11	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	9	47	10	53	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)	10	53	6	32	2	11	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	8	42	9	47	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	7	37	11	58	1	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	47	8	42	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	10	53	7	37	2	11	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	11	58	5	26	3	16	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



24 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brockswood Primary School, Hemel Hempstead, HP2 7QH

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you. You were friendly and gave us a lot of valuable information. Although there have been some recent improvements to your school you have not had enough help to achieve as well as you should. The school has therefore been given a 'notice to improve' which means that it will get extra support and some inspectors will return to see how you are doing. We found that children in Reception make a satisfactory start in school. Teaching and the curriculum are now satisfactory. Adults in the school know you as individuals and they keep you safe. Most of you have positive attitudes to learning although a few of you do not always listen well in lessons and have to be reminded to pay attention and contribute.

These are the main strengths we noted.

You make a good contribution to school life through helping out.

You get on well with each other at play times.

You have a good understanding of how to keep healthy, especially about which foods are good for you.

Leaders have introduced changes which are helping you to learn better.

Your behaviour and attitudes to learning are improving.

We have asked your headteacher and the other adults to do these things.

Help you to do better in school by making sure you get work at the right level and you do not sit on the carpet too long at a time.

Help you to become more involved in your learning by using speaking and listening skills regularly, and doing more investigation and problem solving.

Work more closely with you and your families to help you to come to school regularly.

You can all help by always paying attention in lessons and coming to school unless you are unwell.

Yours sincerely

Peter Clifton

Lead inspector

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