

Brookside Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131956
Local Authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	341260
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Shirley Herring

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	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Paul Newman
Headteacher	Mr Martin Bell
Date of previous school inspection	3 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work; and looked at the school improvement plan, school policies, teachers' plans, pupils' books, assessments of pupils' work and records of their progress, as well as 45 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

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

- the progress of pupils in Key Stage 1, particularly boys
- the consistency of teaching through the school
- the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the quality of provision of care, guidance and support
- pupils' personal development.

Information about the school

This school is smaller than average size and serves an area of mainly social housing. A high proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. Almost all pupils are from a White British background and a higher proportion of pupils than average have special educational needs and/or disabilities. After an extended period of change in management, the headteacher has been in post for three years. The school has earned the Artsmark Gold Award, the Activemark, the Eco-Schools Silver Award and The International Award Foundation Stage Status. There is a pre-school group in school, which is managed independently and was not part of this inspection.

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. It provides an outstanding level of care, guidance and support for its pupils, including the most vulnerable, helping them to make good progress. Pupils say how much they enjoy coming to school and they appreciate that adults listen to them and take their views into account. They say that lessons are more interesting since the more creative curriculum, which they helped to design, was introduced. Older pupils talk enthusiastically about the day they arrived in school to find out that 'disaster' had struck and they had to adopt roles as members of the emergency services and reporters. Recording this experience certainly helped to improve their writing.

Pupils make good progress, overall, and attain standards that are broadly average by the time they leave. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well because their needs are identified at an early stage. The school has outstanding links with other professionals to provide an excellent level of support. Consequently, pupils are able to overcome many barriers to learning and make good progress in their work and in their behaviour and attendance.

Self-evaluation is accurate and is used well to move the school forward. The headteacher has high aspirations for pupils and is leading the drive to improve standards. He is ably supported by a good senior management team. Improvements in the consistency of teaching, procedures for assessing pupils' progress and the curriculum have resulted in improved standards by the end of Year 6 over the past two years. Standards in Key Stage 1 have been slower to improve and attainment could be higher still. Pupils currently in Year 2 are now working closer to the level which is appropriate for their age. This kind of achievement has yet to be represented in results at the end of Year 2. There is no apparent difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children make sound progress in the Nursery, but some opportunities are missed to develop their language skills. The rate of progress accelerates in Reception because lessons are interesting and practical. Good leadership and management are well focused on what children need to learn and are already having an impact on learning in Reception. Moreover, good-quality resources are being used well to enhance learning outside.

Improvements in attainment, teaching and assessment procedures demonstrate that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:

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- providing more opportunities for developing speaking and listening skills for children in the Nursery
- sharing the current good practice in Reception with the Nursery.
- Raise attainment in Key Stage 1 by building on recent improvements in teaching and the curriculum.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils are interested in lessons and try their best. The vast majority concentrate well and make good progress. Occasionally, a small number of pupils find it difficult to sustain their concentration and this affects their learning. Learning is good when pupils are fully involved. For example, pupils in Year 2 responded well when invited to pose questions to their teacher as part of a drama. Pupils make good progress during their time in school and, for the past two years, have attained standards that are broadly average by the end of Year 6. This represents good achievement.

By contrast, standards have been consistently below average at the end of Year 2 for several years. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well because of the excellent level of care and support they receive.

Pupils say they feel safe in school and know that there is an adult they can talk to should they have a concern. Pupils respond well to the school's high expectations and behaviour is good. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle. Healthy food options are readily available and pupils are now growing a variety of vegetables in the school garden. The many sporting activities are very well attended and the school has achieved Activemark status. Pupils make a good contribution to the community as they undertake many responsibilities in school, such as being play leaders and school councillors, and in the wider community through their involvement in activities such as the Ellesmere Port Arts Festival. Sound basic skills and the many opportunities to work together prepare pupils well for the future. Attendance is improving and is now broadly average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and they have a clear understanding of 'care, courtesy, respect and responsibility' which are at the heart of the school's values.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good and so pupils make good progress in lessons. The school's systems for promoting good behaviour are consistently applied and lessons are managed well. Teachers assess pupils' progress regularly and use the information effectively to plan work to match the needs of different groups. This is enabling more pupils to work at a higher level. The skilled teaching assistants provide good support for individuals and groups and make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Teachers are now adopting a more creative approach to planning lessons to motivate pupils to learn. For example, pupils in Year 6 were required to solve a murder mystery by plotting all the clues on a line graph, with great success and enjoyment. Teachers mark work thoroughly and give pupils clear guidance on how they can improve.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of pupils. Pupils are proud that they have been involved in the development of a more creative curriculum which they say has increased their interest and enjoyment and helped them to learn more about different subjects. Parents and carers are also pleased to be involved. One pupil said, 'My dad can't wait to see my topic book!' Pupils now have increasing opportunities to develop their literacy, numeracy and computing skills in a variety of subjects and this has been particularly effective in improving standards in writing. The good programme for personal, social and health education has made a good contribution to pupils' behaviour and well-being. There is an extensive range of additional activities to enhance pupils' learning.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified at a very early stage. The school works with a wide

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range of other professionals to provide the most effective support for individual pupils and so they make good progress. There is an extensive range of additional support for pupils in class and in small groups and the school's good systems for tracking pupils' progress shows that this is helping pupils to achieve well. The learning mentor gives valuable support to pupils, including the most vulnerable, and this helps them to feel safe and secure in school and improves their learning. The school has a wide range of strategies to improve attendance and these have been effective in improving attendance. The school has been particularly successful in working with families to reduce the numbers of pupils who were persistently absent. The school has very strong links with other schools to help pupils prepare for the transition to high school.

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?

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is clearly focused on raising standards and improving pupils' sense of well-being. The school monitors its work carefully and accurately to identify any weaknesses and to plan improvements. Initiatives in staff training, assessments and tracking of pupils' progress have resulted in good improvements in standards in Key Stage 2. It has taken longer to have an impact on attainment in Year 2, though the school's clear records show that standards for pupils by the end of Key Stage 1 are beginning to improve.

Governors undertake their responsibilities diligently, particularly in regard to safeguarding, and are a regular presence in school. They have given their time to attend many courses and are well informed. They provide valued support for the headteacher. The school's efforts to engage parents and carers have been effective. They feel well informed and many have attended courses organised by the school. The school has developed excellent links with other professionals and this cooperative approach has helped significantly to improve attendance, standards and behaviour. The school is good at promoting equal opportunities for all its pupils. The school has all the required procedures for safeguarding pupils securely in place. Staff are well trained and there is extensive provision in the personal, social and health education programme to educate pupils in keeping themselves safe.

The school promotes community cohesion well. It has established links with schools that have pupils from different social and cultural backgrounds to help pupils to understand and appreciate diversity. Pupils regularly exchange views and ideas through the school's

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learning platform. They join in well with local festivals and events. Pupils have developed a good understanding of the Spanish language and culture and the school is now seeking ways to help them develop a wider, global awareness.

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory but is improving due to the good leadership of the current Early Years Foundation Stage manager. Children enter the Nursery with a range of skills that, overall, are below levels that could be expected for their age and the speaking skills of some children are particularly weak. They make sound progress, overall, but nevertheless children enter Year 1 with skills that are below the expected level. Learning is satisfactory in the Nursery but opportunities are sometimes missed to engage children in speaking. The satisfactory range of activities in the Nursery does not always engage the interest of some children so they become restless and this affects their learning. Progress accelerates in the Reception class where activities are interesting and suitably practical, showing a good understanding of how young children learn.

There are good systems in place to assess and track children's progress and the information is being used well in Reception to plan work to match the needs of different groups. Parents and carers throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage are welcomed into school. They enjoy reading their children's learning journeys and many offer a contribution about their children's learning at home. Phonic skills are being taught systematically and well to help children develop their reading skills.

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Children are developing an understanding of a healthy lifestyle as they enjoy healthy fruit snacks and they learn how to use implements such as scissors safely. They develop a sense of independence from an early age as they choose their name card to show they have arrived in the Nursery each morning. There are developing links with the Year 1 class to help children move easily to the next stage of learning.

Leadership is good. All the recommended systems for safeguarding children are in place. The manager has evaluated its work rigorously and accurately and is using the information to plan improvements. Improvements in teaching are having a positive impact on children's learning in Reception and the school is aware of the need to share this good practice with the Nursery.

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	2

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming number of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire are happy with the school and agree that this is a good school where children feel safe. A small number of parents and carers said they were unhappy about how the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. The inspectors found that teachers used the school's behaviour policy consistently and any examples of inappropriate behaviour in lessons were managed well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Brookside 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 46 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 205 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	61	14	30	3	7	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	36	78	9	20	0	0	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	28	61	16	35	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	52	18	39	3	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	35	76	10	22	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	59	18	39	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	52	20	43	1	2	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)	24	52	14	30	1	2	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	61	14	30	3	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	46	16	35	6	13	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	48	21	46	2	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	29	63	15	33	2	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	67	13	28	2	4	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 Brookside Primary School, Ellesmere Port, CH66 2EE

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. You are rightly proud of the contribution you have made to planning improvements, particularly in the curriculum. We were pleased to see how much this is helping you to enjoy your lessons and to learn. I was really sorry to have to leave the Year 6 mathematics lesson before you solved the murder mystery. Perhaps Year 6 could tell Mr Bell who did it and ask him to let me know.

I agree with you and your parents and carers that Brookside is a good school which provides a good education and takes excellent care of you all. You make good progress in school and most of you are working at the level expected for your age by the time you go to high school. You play your part by working hard in lessons and behaving well. I hope that you continue to try hard to get to school every day. You told us you feel safe in school and know that there is an adult you can talk to if you need help. The healthy lunches and the many sporting activities you take part in are helping you to understand how to have a healthy lifestyle very well.

When we visit a school it is part of our job to suggest ways in which even a good school could be better. I have asked the school to:

- help children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to make more progress and improve their skills in talking about their interests and ideas
- make sure that children in Key Stage 1 continue to improve so achievement is even better by the end of Year 2.

Thank you once again for your help. We hope that, when the weather improves, you enjoy the beautiful garden that you have helped to create.

Yours faithfully

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