

Brookfields Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110186
Local Authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	356694
Inspection dates	15–16 September 2010
Reporting inspector	James Bowden

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	195
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	35
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr M Lear
Headteacher	Mrs J Headland
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2007
School address	Sage Road Tilehurst Reading RG31 6SW
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 13 lessons, seeing 13 teachers, as well as making shorter visits to other lessons to check on differing aspects of the school's work. Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteachers, members of the senior management team and others with posts of responsibility. In addition, a telephone discussion was held with the Chair of the Governing Body. An inspector also looked at the after-school club. Inspectors met with the school council and with a small group of sixth form students. They looked at samples of pupils' and students' work, their assessment and progress files, and teachers' planning and assessment records. The lead inspector analysed questionnaires from 106 parents and carers, 89 pupils and 78 staff.

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

- the progress and achievement of different groups of pupils and students over time across the school
- whether teaching is sufficiently challenging for all pupils and students in enabling them to make the best progress possible
- the effectiveness of leadership and management across the school
- the effectiveness of the school's sixth form provision.

Information about the school

Brookfields is a well above average sized special school when compared with similar schools. It provides for pupils and students with a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. All children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils and students through to the end of sixth form have statements of special educational needs. Approximately a quarter are for severe learning difficulties; other large groups include those with profound and multiple learning difficulties or those with moderate learning difficulties. Close to half of all pupils have some kind of autistic spectrum disorder and this has increased considerably since the last inspection. In addition, the school caters for some pupils and students with physical disabilities, visual impairment and speech, language and communication needs. Currently, there are no children under three years old at the school but provision is available. Early Years Foundation Stage children and pupils in Years 1 to 3 are taught together in groups according to their learning needs. Pupils and students come from both the local and neighbouring local authorities. The large majority are of White British heritage. A few are from Asian and Black Caribbean backgrounds. Boys outnumber girls by over two to one. The proportion of pupils and students known to be eligible for free schools meals is above the national average. A few pupils are looked after by their respective local authorities. Since the last inspection, the school has been re-designated Specialist School status for Cognition and Learning. In addition, it now provides an Outreach and Consultancy Service for mainstream schools and is also involved in county and national initiatives linked to its specialism. There are an after-school club and a holiday club as well as a youth club, provided on the school site, which is managed by the governing body.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is an outstanding school, which meets its core aim of providing a personalised education for all pupils in a learning community where entitlement, opportunity and challenge are championed. The ethos of providing outstanding care, guidance, support and safeguarding underpins the school's work across all phases.

As a result of its specialist status, the school has continued to provide highly organised and very effective provision for pupils through its 'Autism and Behavioural Support Service and Sensory Provision'. Pupils' and students' behaviour is outstanding, and they have made exceptional progress in improving this aspect of their personal development. A significant strength of the school is the school's outreach services, which includes outstanding collaborative working with an extensive range of other professionals and specialist organisations. This promotes pupils' well-being and learning particularly well. The school is highly effective in supporting not only pupils but also parents and carers, especially in terms of transition arrangements. Almost all parents are highly appreciative of the school's work, which has been recognised by the Investors in Families Award. One parent wrote, 'The quality of teaching and care my child receives is second to none.'

Pupils are achieving well because of the carefully dovetailed education and support package offered. On entry, some children are not ready to learn and have very low level skills, both socially and academically. While the levels of attainment reached by the time they leave school at the end of the sixth form are exceptionally low, individuals make good overall progress in their academic studies and personal development. Notably, pupils and students make an exceptional contribution to the community and benefit from outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These many very strong features prepare them well for transition to the next stage of their education and, eventually, for life beyond the school. In this respect, their preparation for the future is very strong but because their basic academic skills are generally very low their overall economic well-being is good rather than outstanding.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning. Teaching is outstanding, which makes a striking impact on their good overall academic learning and outstanding wider personal development. As a result of the calm and sensitive support from all adults in the school, pupils are safe, persevere very well in lessons, develop their independence and develop well their capacity to make informed choices. Every day, not only do pupils arrive with smiling faces and positive attitudes, they also leave in a positive and contented manner. The excellent curriculum, reflecting that taught in mainstream schools, underpins the school's focus on improving pupils' communication and their key skills, as well as their

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personal development.

Safeguarding arrangements are very impressive. Procedures are constantly updated to reflect developing technologies, with high-quality risk assessment systems which ensure that those who have barriers to communication are treated at all times with dignity and respect. The school's contribution to community cohesion is outstanding within its own community, the local community and beyond. This is as a result of curriculum planning, the impact of this on pupils' personal development and the extensive range of community initiatives and partnerships as a result of the school's specialism.

Effective self-evaluation has resulted in good quality planning with a focus on continuing to improve pupils' outcomes. The strategic vision and direction provided by the headteacher, in post since summer 2009, and deputy headteachers have contributed well to improvement since the last inspection, as well as identifying new strategies to move the school onwards and upwards. However, there is inconsistency in the way that leaders identify the impact of the school's work and analyse and use assessment data in order to improve further the quality of pupils' academic progress. Notwithstanding this, in the light of the improvements since the last inspection and the impact of the school's specialist status, the capacity for improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sharpen the analysis and use of assessment data to identify clearly the strengths and weaknesses in the progress of pupils in different key stages in order to help lift their overall academic achievement still further.
- Ensure greater consistency in the way leaders monitor and evaluate the work of the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

In lessons, all pupils consolidate and build on previous learning and make good and sometimes outstanding progress in relation to their individual learning targets. Leaders are keen to further improve assessment procedures to accelerate all pupils' and students' progress to outstanding in the future. Pupils and students benefit greatly from working in groups according to their special needs where they receive focused and individual attention, which helps them to think hard and work independently. In a Key Stage 3 personal, social and health education lesson, pupils developed their knowledge and understanding of the difference between 'wants' and 'rights'. Their very positive attitudes, excellent behaviour and thoughtful responses to the teachers' questions were indicative of their enjoyment of this activity. Pupils with severe learning difficulties made outstanding progress in a physical education lesson. This was particularly evident by the palpable delight shown on the faces of those experiencing supported movements on the trampoline. In the lunchtime choir group, pupils sang with enthusiasm and there were lots of 'train' sounds and arm movements during the song 'Engine Number 9'.

As well as eating healthily and understanding the importance of this, all pupils participate in a wide range of physical activities. These include 'wake-up and shake-up'

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exercise, formal physical education lessons (including swimming), Move Opportunities via Education (MOVE) sessions, enrichment activities and the after-school club. Achievement is recognised by the Enhanced Healthy Schools status and recognition as a centre of excellence for MOVE.

Pupils are involved in the life of the school through the school council and pupil surveys, which ensure their opinions and views are listened to. Minutes of these meetings are read and acted upon by the governing body. Pupils' use of community facilities and involvement in the school by members of the local community have helped raise awareness of disability all round. In addition, pupils have gained an understanding of other pupils and the lives they lead as a result of the school's support for local and national charities, as well as with partnerships with special schools in both Uganda and Afghanistan.

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	*
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	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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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How effective is the provision?

The collaborative approach and teamwork of all adults underpin the quality of teaching and the significant overall progress made by individuals in lessons; it has a striking impact on learning and pupils' and students' attitudes. Teachers make thorough in-depth assessment of individuals' progress towards their academic and personal development targets in lessons but they are not as effective in tracking the progress of the different key stages. A key strength is the focus on promoting communication through the appropriate use of PECS visual symbol cards, Makaton signing and teachers' questioning. New technologies are also used effectively to enhance teaching and enliven learning, and support pupils' progress in all aspects of their work. Adults' use of praise and encouragement for pupils is never overly effusive but positively encouraging. Teaching is very carefully tailored to individual needs, as seen in a secondary class mathematics lesson, where a more capable pupil was helped to gain an increased understanding of number patterns while a less capable pupil's understanding of time was improved significantly.

The strength of the curriculum is how well it supports pupils' personal development and prepares them for transition to life beyond the school. It is also highly effective in developing their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Because classes are grouped according to pupils' particular special needs, this enables the curriculum to be tailored well to meet these. Excellent partnership arrangements with other educational establishments, and specialist providers, contribute highly effectively to older pupils' learning experiences. Senior leadership is consistent in its drive to ensure the curriculum matches pupils' needs, as evidenced by recent changes to improve opportunities further for the growing number of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. An extensive range of enrichment activities, including the after-school club, broadens pupils' learning experiences. However, the quality of the temporary indoor environment of the club and limited resources inhibits the quality of children's play.

Pupils' health, safety, well-being and happiness are at the forefront of the school's strong ethos of care. Welfare requirements are also met in the after-school club. A member of the school council commented: 'Teachers look after us. They care for us. The caretaker keeps the school safe and secure.' A carefully managed and executed programme of annual reviews is effective in supporting pupils as they move through the school and when they leave for the next stage of their education. Procedures for improving attendance have resulted in minimal unauthorised absence.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<p>The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning</p>	<p>1</p>
<p>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</p>	<p>1</p>

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The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1
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How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, her senior leadership team and subject leaders have a shared vision for the direction of the school and they are keenly developing the roles of middle leaders, although this continues to be an area for development. Although school leaders are aware of the strengths in assessing progress of individuals in lessons, they have rightly identified a need to focus on improving assessment procedures at whole-school level. This is especially so in relation to identifying how well pupils in different key stages are making progress over time in relation to the national guidance for pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities. This, they recognise, would enable them to quantify rates of progress more accurately. Staff value the school's contribution to their professional development, which has been recognised by the school's Investors in People award.

The governing body is highly effective as a critical and supportive friend of the school. It ensures safeguarding has a high priority, regularly monitoring and evaluating this to ensure procedures and practices are of high quality and that there are close working relationships with external agencies. It has also been highly proactive and supportive in the school's new sixth form building and general refurbishment project. The school is effective in ensuring that all have equality of opportunity, as it is in tackling racial discrimination, which results in a good ethos for inclusion.

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	1
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Staff care for the children exceptionally well. The registration requirements are fully met. Very strong partnerships are established with parents, carers and external agencies. The provision is extremely safe so that children quickly gain confidence and make good progress. The quality of teaching and learning is good, with particular strengths in the way that they develop communication and personal, social and emotional skills. Resources are good and indoor learning is of a high quality. Staff work very effectively together to assess individual children's progress, using the information to carefully plan activities to accelerate children's learning. Although the outdoor area provides some satisfactory activities to cover all areas of learning, the school has plans in place to improve the quality of this to better match the range of children's needs even further. Leadership and management are good and there is a clear aspiration for continuous improvement. However, there are too few opportunities for leaders to check strengths and weaknesses of the provision and to use assessment data to check on the overall progress of the children in each year group, including, where appropriate, progress in reaching the early learning goals.

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

Sixth form

Students enjoy the sixth form and make excellent progress in developing their independence and personal attributes. Underpinning this is the wide range of opportunities provided in the curriculum, including work related opportunities, visits to the local community and courses at local colleges. These broaden students' learning and help them prepare for life beyond the school. Students commented that they learned lots of new things and also appreciated being able to attend out-of-school clubs. Following a morning visit to Purley Park, as part of their Awards Scheme Development and Accreditation horticulture course, their Horticultural Therapist then used information and communication technology (ICT) to good effect in the afternoon to present materials they could cut and paste to make a record of this. All adults in the room were highly effective in their support for students and ensured they were involved and learning. Nevertheless, some of the more capable could have had more challenging work as they finished the activity rather quickly. Although teachers record progress carefully against the very clear objectives laid down in the courses students follow, it is

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unclear how well they are making progress in the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT in relation to their starting points on joining the sixth form. Excellent quality care, guidance and support for students underpin further the provision and positive outcomes in the sixth form.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Almost all parents and carers who returned the questionnaires are very pleased with the school's provision. In particular, they believe their children enjoy school, the school keeps their children safe, the teaching is good and that the school is led and managed effectively. A very few had some concerns about how well the school supported their child's learning. The inspectors could find no evidence that this was an issue for the school. There were a few negative responses but no discernable pattern of discontent was evident.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Brookfields 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 106 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 195 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	82	77	21	20	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	80	75	23	22	0	0	2	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	64	60	38	36	1	1	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	58	55	38	36	2	2	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	72	68	29	27	1	1	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	67	63	33	31	3	3	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	58	55	45	42	0	0	1	1
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)	61	58	33	31	1	1	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	70	66	32	30	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	66	62	34	32	0	0	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	61	58	38	36	0	0	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	76	72	27	25	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	82	77	22	21	0	0	1	1

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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.



23 September 2010

Dear Pupils and Students

Inspection of Brookfields School, Tilehurst, RG31 6SW

Not so long ago, three of us came to your school to see how well you are getting on and whether we could suggest anything to make things even better for you. We really enjoyed meeting you in lessons and around the school, and being able to have a formal chat with the school council and a group of sixth form students. Lots of smiling faces throughout the day and the positive things you said showed us that you really enjoy what you do in school. We decided your school is outstanding.

- The headteacher and her senior team lead the school well and have plans to keep making things even better for you.
- The school's specialist status means there is lots of extra provision for you.
- The school works really well with lots of other people, including your parents and carers, to support you.
- You enjoy learning and make good progress in your learning, especially in the way that you are learning to behave outstandingly well.
- All staff care for you really well and make sure you are safe.
- In lessons, staff give you all the help and support they can.
- The school makes sure there are lots of exciting things for you to do.

We have asked your headteacher to do the following important things:

- Make sure your progress is measured very carefully
- Make sure all senior staff are consistent in the way they check how well the school is doing.

Finally, we really enjoyed our time at the school as well!

Yours sincerely

James Bowden

Lead inspector

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