

Brackenwood Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105021
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	354347
Inspection dates	13–14 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Sarah Drake

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	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Eric Mahers
Headteacher	Mrs C Green
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed nine lessons and parts of lessons taught by eight teachers or teaching assistants. The inspectors held meetings with school staff, members of the governing body and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation relating to pupils' progress and school management. The inspectors also took into account the questionnaires completed by 16 staff and 66 parents and carers.

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

- the progress made by pupils, with a particular focus on writing and girls' progress in mathematics
- the effectiveness of teachers' use of assessment to provide challenge for pupils
- the rigour with which the leadership identifies and tackles any areas in need of improvement
- the effectiveness of the school's promotion of community cohesion.

Information about the school

This small school serves a suburban area on the eastern side of the Wirral. The great majority of pupils are White British and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils that is known to be eligible to receive a free school meal is broadly average. An above average proportion of pupils have a statement of special educational needs, although the overall proportion of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school has achieved the enhanced National Healthy Schools award and the Financial Management Standard in Schools.

The school shares its site with a privately run pre-school setting. This did not form part of this inspection but a report about the quality of its provision can be found on the Ofsted website.

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

1

Main findings

This outstanding school has maintained its high quality over three inspections during which time it has provided many young children with an excellent start to their education. First-rate leadership which combines rigour with sensitivity ensures that all staff work together as an exceptionally strong team and constantly review both their own and the school's practice in order to drive forward improvement. Accurate self-evaluation that leads to highly effective action underpins the school's excellent capacity to improve further. For example, in response to a recent dip from the usually high attainment levels, close analysis of pupils' work identified a relative weakness in their comprehension skills. Actions to improve the quality of guided reading sessions, as well as an increase in the use of drama and other exciting activities, have had an impressive impact. Current pupils' attainment in reading is high, including the numbers reaching the higher Level 3. Attainment in mathematics is well above average but in writing it is closer to average. Pupils' written work is imaginative and detailed but it includes too many grammatical inaccuracies.

Most children join Reception with the skills expected for their age. The stimulating environment helps them to develop a delight in learning and enables them to make rapid all-round progress. In response to teaching of high quality and a rich curriculum, pupils of all abilities continue to make outstanding progress throughout the school and achieve exceptionally well. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to adopt healthy lifestyles and take great pride in making their contribution to the community. They are tolerant and resourceful and behave impeccably.

Among the school's many strengths, the high quality of care, guidance and support that all staff provide for the pupils shines like a beacon. 'My daughter loves school. She is treated as an individual and is given every opportunity to fulfil her potential,' is typical of the many positive comments made by parents and carers. Early analysis of children's needs and abilities combined with very close partnerships between school staff, families and outside agencies ensure that each child receives the tailored support that enables him or her to flourish. This is a very happy school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment levels in writing to at least those achieved in reading and mathematics by:
 - increasing the grammatical accuracy of pupils' written work
 - providing pupils with consistently high quality written guidance on how to

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improve their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils describe their school as, 'brilliant because there are lots to play with in lessons and everyone is caring and friendly'. They settle well at the start of sessions, pay excellent attention when adults or other pupils are speaking and try very hard with their work. The very best lessons buzz with activity and concentrated thought as, for example, pupils sustain newly learned rhythms to create a toe-tapping three-part sea shanty or use their observation and calculation skills to solve a variety of addition and subtraction sums. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have as positive attitudes to learning as their peers and make similar outstanding progress because the high quality, sensitive support is so well adjusted to their individual needs. In all subjects, girls and boys achieve equally well and many are working at levels well above those gained nationally by the end of Year 2. Pupils' writing is vivid and engaging. For example, 'Ten odd years ago I made a warm hole so I could time travel thru the past', from a boy in Year 1, or a Year 2 girl's description of Captain Hook, 'He was tuff but not bright'. However, misspellings of even simple words together with erratic punctuation and sentence structure mean that attainment in writing is broadly average. Pupils' high quality artwork greatly enhances the learning environment.

Positive, warm relationships abound throughout the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They are interested in others, quick to offer help and cooperate extremely well. They fully accept that some find learning and self-discipline more difficult than others, and respond in a generous manner to those in need. Pupils behave sensibly, obey instructions and say they feel very safe in school, but they seldom weigh up for themselves the risks attached to activities. They are very knowledgeable about, and adopt, healthy eating habits, and keenly engage in active play. Many willingly take on responsibilities, such as being school councillors. They are strongly aware of environmental issues and instigate charitable activities, such as a towel collection for stray animals. Participation in, for example, music festivals extends their community contribution to a wider area. Pupils' positive attitudes and well-developed basic skills, including their facility with information and communication technology, prepare them exceptionally well for the future.

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	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
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	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is very well organised and highly effective. Teachers make excellent use of the information gained from their frequent assessment of pupils' progress to plan lessons according to their different needs. The variety of activities - including brain gym, partner discussion and hot seating when one person 'in role' answers others' questions - keeps pupils fully engaged and caters for those who learn in different ways. Clear explanations, effective support from teaching assistants and high quality questioning that extends the learning of the more able ensure that all pupils work purposefully and make excellent progress. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to develop pupils' independence and skills even further. Some marking is of high quality, providing pupils with sharply focused pointers on how to improve their work, especially their writing, but this is not consistent in all classes.

Staff adapt the curriculum flexibly so that it builds on pupils' interests and meets their needs outstandingly well. Small group work for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities helps them prosper. The promotion of pupils' personal and emotional development is a real strength. Visits to places of interest and visitors into school, ranging from willow weavers to Saudi Arabian ministers, provide pupils with memorable experiences and inspire their work in many areas. Reading partners, sports and French links with the secondary school greatly enhance the quality of learning and broaden pupils' horizons. Themes, such as pirates, and the linking of subjects help pupils to make sense of their learning. Firm plans are in place to improve the provision for information and communication technology so that pupils will no longer have to share up to four to a computer.

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Children's well-being lies at the heart of all the school's work. Staff use their excellent knowledge of individuals' circumstances to support them in any way possible. Highly effective behaviour management, with a consistent, positive approach, creates a calm, predictable environment in which pupils grow in self-esteem and can, therefore, make great strides forward in their learning. Well thought out arrangements prepare pupils extremely well for their move to junior school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Very regular scrutiny of pupils' work, analysis of their progress and observations of lessons underpin the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation and lead to swift action to tackle any potential weakness. Senior leaders provide a very clear vision but all staff are involved in development planning and held accountable for their areas of responsibility. This leads to a strong sense of teamwork and high morale. The governing body is staunchly supportive of the school and rigorous over matters of finance, health and safety. Members are becoming more involved in strategic development and increasing their understanding of how to use information about pupils' attainment and progress in order to hold the school even more closely to account. Its careful prudence and the high quality of pupils' achievements ensure excellent value for money. Safeguarding training, procedures and practices are of good quality with particular strengths in the identification of and support for the children whose circumstances have made them most vulnerable and for their families. In its determination to include and provide as well as possible for all pupils, the school promotes equality of opportunity exceptionally well. It has made a good start on developing its promotion of community cohesion within the local area, has email links with a school in Spain and has a comprehensive action plan to develop its work further. The school works in very close partnership with parents and carers to ensure that their children's first experience of education forms a strong basis for future enjoyment and success.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

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	2
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's skills on entry to Reception vary considerably but are broadly as expected for their age. After one year, many join Year 1 with skills well above those related to their age. This is because the rich classroom environment and skilful adult interaction help them to make excellent progress, especially in their personal development and problem-solving skills. Children also develop impressive creative skills as demonstrated by their large paintings of mini-beasts and their total engagement in imaginative play. For example, a small group attracted many others, including a hastily created paramedic, to help put out a 'fire' and rescue an animal on the climbing frame. Children concentrate for long periods, can use negotiation to avoid possible fallings out, and behave exceptionally well at all times. As elsewhere in the school, their writing skills are not quite as well developed as other areas. Staff use their stringent observations and assessment of individuals to plan the next steps in their learning so that children can develop confidently at their own rate. The leadership has a wholly accurate understanding of the provision's strengths and clear plans to tackle those areas in need of further development, such as the use of the outdoors. Excellent liaison with parents and carers and with the many settings that children attend before they join the school ensures that they each receive individualised, high-quality provision from day one. Outstanding levels of care foster children's confidence and help them grow into happy, thoughtful learners.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

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Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who expressed their views are full of praise for the school's work. They find staff very easy to approach and say that any concerns are dealt with speedily. Some of those who have had more than one child at the school specifically praise their positive experiences going back over a number of years. A small number, no more than one person in each case, expressed concerns about a range of issues. The inspection findings confirm parents' and carers' positive views. Team members judge the school to be outstanding but acknowledge that no institution is ever perfect.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Brackenwood Infant 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 66 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 169 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	56	85	10	15	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	59	89	6	9	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	46	70	19	29	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	50	76	16	24	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	54	82	12	18	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	42	64	23	35	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	44	67	22	33	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)	45	68	18	27	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	44	67	21	32	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	39	59	25	38	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	61	23	35	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	53	80	12	18	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	59	89	7	11	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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:	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. ■ 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.



15 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brackenwood Infant School, Wirral, CH63 2HN

Thank you for making the other inspectors and me so welcome when we visited your school before the summer holidays. Particular thanks should go to those of you who gave up some of your lunchtime play to speak with us. You helped us to get a good idea of what it is like to be a pupil at your school.

You told us that it is brilliant, you have lots of fun in lessons and everyone is friendly. We agree with you and have used a very long word, 'outstanding', to describe Brackenwood Infants. The children in F2 have a lovely time, particularly in the role-play areas. We were very impressed by how much progress you all make in your learning and also by your excellent behaviour and understanding about how to live healthily. Your vegetables looked just about ready for picking before the end of term! Your reading and numeracy skills are well above average for your age. Your writing levels are not quite as high because, although you have lots of lovely ideas and use 'wow' words, you still need a bit more help to get your spelling and punctuation right more often.

All the staff look after you really well so that you feel comfortable and happy in school and can concentrate on your work. We could see how much they try to help each one of you do the very best you can. The senior staff are very good at deciding what they can do to make your school even better, such as adding the new front entrance which is so beautifully decorated with your flower collages. We think that your school is likely to continue going from strength to strength.

I do hope that you continue to enjoy your learning and to try as hard as you do now, and I send you my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Sarah Drake

Lead inspector

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