

Brushwood Junior School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 110523 |
| Local Authority | Buckinghamshire |
| Inspection number | 288702 |
| Inspection dates | 1–2 May 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Stephen Parker |

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

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| Type of school | Junior |
| School category | Foundation |
| Age range of pupils | 7–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 180 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Barbara Young |
| Headteacher | Mr Ray Plimsaul |
| Date of previous school inspection | 20 January 2003 |
| School address | Brushwood Road Chesham HP5 3DW |
| Telephone number | 01494 786023 |
| Fax number | 01494 793114 |

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|--------------------------|--------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. There are fewer pupils on roll than at the previous inspection though numbers have begun to rise recently. Attainment on entry varies but is broadly average. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds including a substantial number from community housing. More than usual come from minority ethnic groups and have English as an additional language. A few pupils are at the early stage of learning English. The proportion with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average. The school has achieved the Arts Mark and Eco Schools awards.

Key for inspection grades

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|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the school is good with some outstanding features and the school judges itself similarly. Pupils achieve well and make good progress to reach above average standards by Year 6. The quality of care, guidance and support for all pupils is good overall and, for pupils with specific needs, it is outstanding. All pupils are fully included in the life of the school. Staff know their pupils very well and give them strong encouragement to do their best. As a result pupils' behaviour is outstanding and they have excellent attitudes to learning.

The approach to assessing and tracking pupils' progress has been considerably improved in the last two years. The information now shows staff much more clearly where additional effort and resources are needed to tackle underachievement. Standards have risen sharply as a result. Pupils' performance is particularly high in mathematics, which is carefully structured so that they build on success. Standards in science are above average and pupils now perform well in practical investigations following a revision of the curriculum. Standards in English are also above average overall. The school has made good progress in raising pupils' interest in writing through exciting topics and the use of drama to explore ideas. However, standards of spelling and presentation need further improvement. It is a current school priority to improve provision for information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils use computers to good effect for word-processing but their skills are less well developed in other applications.

Teaching is good overall and some lessons are excellent. Teachers share their enthusiasm for learning thus catching and holding pupils' attention. As a result, they listen carefully and are keen to take part. Lessons are clearly focused and well structured so that pupils learn with confidence. Staff teamwork is strong, and teaching assistants give good quality help to individuals and groups.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school's development and communicates it with zeal. He has inspired the relatively new staff team and given them a strong sense of purpose. Governance is good and all statutory requirements are met. Governors have worked successfully with senior management to lead the school through recent difficulties including many staff changes. The school has high aspirations based on a commendable commitment to self-review and professional development. All aspects of performance are analysed thoroughly and targets for school improvement are based on a clear understanding of needs. The school gives good value for money and has well founded plans to reduce the current budget surplus. The very large majority of parents strongly appreciate the school's work. Positive links with outside agencies and the community are fostered to benefit pupils' learning. Bearing in mind the school's commitment to self-evaluation, its determined drive to raise standards, the involvement of governors and support of parents, the school is well placed to continue to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in writing, particularly spelling and presentation.
- Ensure that pupils develop skills in ICT systematically and use those skills to aid learning in other subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average by Year 6. Test results were broadly average following the previous inspection but they improved sharply in 2006 because of the school's determined efforts. Results were exceptionally high in mathematics and significantly above average in English and science. Current Year 6 pupils' attainment is lower than last year but still high in mathematics and above average in English and science. Within this good picture of improvement, there are weaknesses in pupils' writing, particularly spelling and presentation. Pupils have good skills in word processing, though skills in other aspects of ICT are less well developed.

Pupils achieve well. They start in Year 3 with broadly average standards though there is a wide range. A significant number have weak language skills or are learning English as an additional language. The school also admits a few pupils transferred from other schools because of their challenging behaviour. All pupils make good progress because teaching and resources are well matched to their needs. This includes those from minority ethnic backgrounds and those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Pupils with English as an additional language, including those at an early stage, also make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. An outstanding feature is pupils' exemplary behaviour. They interact very well together, especially when taking part in group activities during lessons and playtimes. Pupils thoroughly enjoy what the school offers. This is reflected in their above average attendance and a good level of involvement in clubs. Many develop sporting and musical talents and take part in inter-school competitions and performances. They are proud of their achievements celebrated in 'Well Done' assemblies. One typically appreciative parent commented, 'Brushwood is a friendly school where my child is very happy.' Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good based upon the caring ethos of the school which nurtures values and respect for others. Pupils know what is expected of them and accept responsibilities willingly. They like being elected to the School Council. Their recent efforts have included improving playtime facilities, which are valued by other pupils. This, together with their active involvement in fund raising activities, means pupils contribute well to the school and wider community. Pupils know what makes for a healthy diet and how to remain safe. The high standards they achieve in literacy and numeracy prepare them well for the outside world.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Stimulating practical activities motivate and enhance enjoyment. In an outstanding music lesson, for example, pupils identified everyday signals before exploring and copying sounds on xylophones. They worked very well in groups, discussing their work responsibly. Through the school lessons are well planned, delivered confidently and with pace. A consistent emphasis on careful speaking and listening improves pupils' language skills and builds confidence. Teachers use computer technology and resources well as a stimulus for learning. The working atmosphere is calm and promotes concentration. Teaching assistants

offer a good level of support to pupils with specific needs, including those for whom English is an additional language. As a result, all pupils make good progress. They are aware of their numeracy and literacy targets and involved in judging how well they are doing. Teachers provide useful comments when marking and tell pupils how they can improve although this practice is not standard in all subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A fully inclusive curriculum provides varied, interesting activities which pupils really enjoy. A good range of clubs extends their experiences. The expertise of teachers and visitors is used well to develop skills especially in sport and music. Personal and social education is a strong feature. Pupils are grouped according to ability for literacy and numeracy, which means that work is more closely matched to individual needs. There are imaginative links between subjects to help pupils make sense of their learning. There is a whole-school focus at present on providing greater opportunity for pupils to write at length in other subjects. For example, Year 6 pupils write convincing accounts from the viewpoint of fighter pilots during the Second World War. However, such opportunities are not fully established across all subjects. The school has rightly identified the need to review ICT provision to ensure that pupils use their skills in other subjects. There is a good level of challenge for more able pupils in all subjects and there are plans to increase provision for gifted and talented pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good and that for pupils with specific needs is outstanding. This includes pupils with challenging behaviour, those learning English as an additional language or with learning difficulties and disabilities. Staff develop warm relationships with pupils and encourage them to do their best. Pupils of all backgrounds respond well to this by working and playing together harmoniously. Child protection measures are well understood and meet current official requirements. The school tracks pupils' progress in English and mathematics very closely and follows up with determined action to tackle underachievement. This rigorous process has been at the heart of the significant rise in standards. Tracking information guides planning so that work is adjusted appropriately for pupils with different needs and additional adult help and resources are used effectively. Targets are set for each pupil so that they have a clear understanding of how to improve. The school is developing a more detailed tracking system for science.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. The head teacher is ably supported by his deputy and a talented staff team. Subject leaders are working well to check provision and standards across the school. The shared purpose and drive of all staff have had a considerable impact on raising standards. Academic targets are challenging. It is notable that the official targets for 2007 have been revised upwards by a wide margin recently because pupils are making much better progress than predicted. The well-being of all pupils is given a high priority. As a result they are happy to learn, feel safe and well cared for.

Governance is good and all statutory requirements are met. Governors have worked successfully with senior management to lead the school through recent difficulties, notably over staffing. The school evaluates its performance rigorously and accurately so that the targets for improvement are based on a good understanding of needs.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | School Overall |
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Overall effectiveness

| | |
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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 2 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 1 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 2 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|---|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 2 |

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2 |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 2 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 2 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures? | No |
| Does this school require a notice to improve? | No |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

15 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Brushwood Junior School, Brushwood Road, Chesham, HP5 3DW

As you know we came to see you at school recently to find out how well you are doing. It was wonderful to see how happy you are, taking care of others, including them in your games and helping around the school. We think you are very polite and considerate. We were very impressed with the way you behave in lessons. You pay attention to your teachers and are keen to join in all the activities.

We know that the adults want you to do as well as you can so we have asked them to concentrate on these things:

- to help you get better at writing, particularly in spelling and setting your work out neatly
- to make sure you steadily build up your skills on computers and other ICT equipment and use those skills for work in other subjects.

You can help yourselves to improve by doing your best writing and checking your work carefully for mistakes. You might also think of ways to use ICT for work in different subjects and discuss these with your teachers.

We agree that yours is a good school and you are right to be proud of it. We like your 'Can do' approach and think you will do well in the future if you keep that in mind.

Very best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Parker

Lead Inspector