

Brackensdale (E.R.) Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112736
Local Authority	City of Derby
Inspection number	289389
Inspection dates	12–13 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Ronald Cohen

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	224
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Don Parker
Headteacher	Mr David Hall
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2002
School address	Walthamstow Drive Mackworth Derby DE22 4BS
Telephone number	01332 341 171
Fax number	01332 341 171

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Brackensdale Junior School is an average size school serving families who live on a large estate of local authority housing. The pupils are from predominantly White British backgrounds. The number of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. Pupils come to the school with skill levels which are generally well below the national average. The school receives increased funding for a unit catering for pupils with special educational needs, particularly those children with Autism. The number of such children is growing, and the school's percentage of pupils with statements for special educational needs is well above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school in which positive relationships and outstanding pastoral care effectively support pupils' personal development and well-being. Much good work by the headteacher and the staff has resulted in pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work to being outstanding. Parents and carers are very positive about the work of the headteacher and staff. They are content that their children are very happy and very safe at school. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The provision of a unit for pupils who have significant learning difficulties or disabilities is having a positive impact on the quality of their work so that they make good progress, in line with other pupils with learning difficulties. However, this rate of progress has yet to be established throughout the school. Whilst progress is satisfactory, standards reached by 11 year-olds remain well below average and some higher attaining pupils do not always reach their full potential.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) in their lessons and pupils have access to an ICT suite to support learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported by teaching assistants and specialist teachers. The quality of marking by teachers is satisfactory and pupils receive guidance on how to improve their work. However, teachers' use of assessment, though improving, does not consistently lead to appropriate challenge for all pupils.

The curriculum is good and is a strong feature of the school's provision. Pupils participate in a wide range of exciting curricular activities which include a particular focus on sport and music. There is scope for increased opportunities for independent learning, particularly for high attaining pupils. Children's personal, social and emotional development is good and as a result they have increasing levels of confidence and independence. The enrichment curriculum encourages pupils to expand their horizons and allows them to contribute exceptionally well to the school community and the local community.

The headteacher, supported by knowledgeable governors, provides a strong lead for the management team. They have been particularly successful in creating a school where there is a buzz of excitement and enthusiasm from pupils and staff alike. The school works well with parents and other agencies to support the education of its pupils. All leaders are involved in the evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school's self evaluation is mostly accurate. Leaders and the staff have a clear picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. Their well thought out development plan is focussed on raising standards and achievement for all pupils. Their many successes, so far, in its implementation have created the learning environment which has already led to good progress amongst a large number of lower attaining pupils, whilst establishing a 'can-do' culture in the school for all pupils. This shows that the school has good capacity for future developments.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the higher attaining pupils are sufficiently challenged and have increased opportunities to work independently
- Improve the quality of teaching so that all of it is good or better.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which has areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Test results for Year 6 pupils in 2006 were well below average in English, mathematics and science. Current standards remain well below average. This reflects the changing profile in the year groups, with a substantial proportion of the pupils having a statement of special educational need or with learning difficulties. In spite of this, the school's assessment data confirms that the vast majority of pupils make satisfactory progress in reading, writing and mathematics and some achieve well. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Those pupils who have additional learning difficulties achieve well against their individual targets. However, some pupils capable of achieving higher standards do not achieve as well as they should because they are not always stretched sufficiently in class.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good, as is their adopting of healthy lifestyle choices. The school's commitment to healthy lifestyles has been rewarded by being one of only five schools chosen in the authority to take part in the 'B-Active' scheme to raise the profile of activity levels for children. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding in lessons and around the school. This, together with their good attendance, reflects pupils' enjoyment of all aspects of school life. Pupils feel safe at school and very well prepared for risks they may face out of school. Generally, pupils show kindness, care and consideration towards others and work together harmoniously. The school council represents their fellow pupils well and undertakes a range of responsibilities, which help the school run smoothly. Pupils are polite, courteous and welcoming to visitors. They participate willingly in many events within and outside school which enables them to contribute to the school and the local community. Duties include being 'assembly helpers' and making weekly visits to the local sheltered accommodation for the elderly. Pupils attain some workplace skills which will be good for their economic well being, particularly in collaborative working. However, their lack of some basic skills in literacy and numeracy means that this aspect of their personal development is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The impact of teaching on pupils' learning and achievement is satisfactory. In the more effective lessons planning focuses on pupils' learning and teachers make a special point of checking regularly that all pupils are learning effectively. However, teachers do not always use their knowledge of what pupils are capable of in order to plan sufficiently challenging activities that move pupils on to attain their full potential. This is particularly so for some higher attaining pupils and means fewer of them attain the higher standards. Support for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is good. Teachers and teaching assistants know these pupils well and meet their needs effectively. Teaching assistants work well with teachers. There are good

relationships between adults and pupils, based on mutual respect. This means that pupils feel valued and engage in learning enthusiastically.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The range of learning opportunities is good. The curriculum is organised thoughtfully into themes in order to add interest, relevance and meaning to learning. It makes effective links between all National Curriculum subjects and there are planned approaches to developing core skills. The curriculum is managed well and regularly audited to ensure that it is constantly improved and meets requirements. However, the curriculum does not always effectively enable pupils capable of higher attainment to reach their full potential, because it does not yet fully enhance their independent learning skills. Good provision is made for pupils' personal development. Curriculum enrichment is outstanding. There are planned themed weeks, such as the Arts Week. Additionally, many opportunities are taken to enrich the curriculum through visits and visitors. A wide range of extra-curricular activities enhances learning effectively and meets the preferences of the vast majority of pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of personal care, guidance and support is good. The pastoral care of pupils is outstanding. The school is a caring community and the concern for the health, safety and personal well being of the pupils is of the highest priority. The school's learning mentor is highly successful in helping pupils with learning and behavioural problems, including those associated with low self-esteem, to do as well as they can. As a result, these pupils feel valued and respond accordingly. All staff are totally committed to providing a supportive and encouraging environment, in which pupils feel safe and secure. This is recognised and welcomed by parents. One parent's comment is typical of many: 'My child has special educational needs. This is why we chose the school. My child has been nurtured, encouraged and given the best educational experience that we could have hoped for'. Child protection procedures are robust and the school complies fully with current requirements for safeguarding children. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported particularly well, enabling them to make good progress in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Despite increasingly changing and challenging circumstances, the headteacher and the governors demonstrate a determination to raise standards for all pupils. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, and is ably supported by the deputy head and by the recently reorganized and strengthened leadership team. The school's good development plan sets out clear directions for the future improvement of the school. Appropriate systems for monitoring teaching are in place although it is too early to see the impact of this on higher standards. Leaders have been successful in tackling issues around pupils' attendance and their attitudes and behaviour. This has been achieved through the skilful use of resources and the effective deployment of teaching assistants.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

14 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brackensdale Junior School, Derby, DE22 4BS

Thank you for being so polite and friendly to us when we recently visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and our conversations with you helped us get a really good picture of your school. I am writing to let you know what we found out.

We found that Brackensdale Junior School is a satisfactory school. But, there are some things which we feel are really good, and some are excellent. We saw how your headteacher and the other adults in the school care for you very well. You told us that you feel school is a very friendly place to be: that you enjoy coming to school and you feel safe in school. We can see this in the ways in which you very cheerfully take part in the interesting activities which the school puts on for you. We were very pleased that many of you, especially the older children, do so much to help around the school. We were also impressed with your excellent behaviour.

We also found some things which the school could develop to help you make better progress. So we have asked your teachers to make sure that you get more chances to use your skills in as many subjects, and in as many different ways as possible, but particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. We have also asked them to make sure that you are all working at your very highest levels. The headteacher, and the other teachers who help him run the school, have very exciting plans to improve everybody's learning, and we have asked them to be especially sure that they make those plans work for all of you, particularly when you are asked to do things on your own in class. Finally, we have asked all of your teachers to make your lessons as good as those which are the best in the school.

This means that you can expect lessons which make you think more, and write more, but with the teachers' help, we believe you will find the work really interesting and that you will benefit in the end.

Thank you once again for being so polite and co-operative and good luck in the future.

Ron Cohen

Lead Inspector