

Brackenwood Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105013
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	308741
Inspection dates	10–11 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Frank Carruthers

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	219
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Blanch Barrow
Headteacher	Mr Tony Lacey
Date of previous school inspection	20 September 2004
School address	Norbury Avenue Bebington Wirral Merseyside CH63 2HH
Telephone number	0151 6083001
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school in which the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. However, the school accommodates up to 12 pupils with moderate learning difficulties and, consequently, the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is twice the national average. Almost all pupils are of White British origin with a very small proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds. None is at the early stages of learning English. The school has gained the Activemark and is currently awaiting the Healthy Schools Promoting School award. It has just completed the standard to achieve the Healthy Schools Award. The deputy headteacher has been acting headteacher since the beginning of the current school year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for pupils and has a number of strengths. It is improving as a result of action taken by the acting headteacher and senior leadership team in the last two terms. In particular, this is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning; staff expectations of pupils are being raised to ensure that pupils achieve well. However, the full impact of the initiatives is yet to be realised and currently pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils start in school with standards that are above average. Standards by the end of Year 6 fluctuate according to the nature of the year group, but pupils' national test results at the end of Year 6 are generally above average. However, while the proportion of Year 6 pupils reaching the expected Level 4 in the tests is generally above average, the proportion reaching the higher Level 5 is only average and not as high as it could be. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those who are taught in the Education Inclusion Base (EIB), make good progress.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave well. They readily take on responsibilities around school and an active school council provides pupils with good opportunities to have their views taken into account. Pupils enjoy school, which is evident for example in the above average levels of attendance. They have a good awareness of personal safety and how to live a fit and healthy lifestyle. They develop effective life skills to help them to do well in their secondary education. Good levels of care and support provided by the school contribute to these positive outcomes. Parents of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities report that their children blossom at the school, evident for instance in this typical comment, 'My child is thriving with the help of the acting headteacher and his dedicated staff.' Guidance for pupils' personal development is good. Guidance for their academic progress is in the process of development. While it is mainly satisfactory, teachers' marking is not consistent across classes because the policy has recently been revised. Consequently, pupils do not always know how to improve their work. The use of assessment information to track pupils' progress and quickly identify any who may be underachieving is inconsistent.

The quality of teaching and learning has improved recently and is now good. Strengths lie in the quality of relationships between staff and pupils, the teaching of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and in the way staff manage pupils' behaviour. The recent improvements to these areas of the school's provision are having a good effect on promoting pupils' current learning, for instance their understanding of how they are doing in lessons and the quality of their written work. However, the impact on their long-term achievement is not yet evident. The curriculum is good. It is well planned and enriched by an effective programme of personal, health and social education and a modern foreign language. There is a wide range of visits, visitors and activities outside lessons which pupils enjoy.

Leadership and management are good and the dynamic leadership of the acting headteacher has moved the school forward well. Senior staff now have a greater involvement in decision making and in improving the quality of provision. There is strong teamwork among staff and governors who all clearly share the acting headteacher's vision for the school. School self-evaluation is good. The views of the senior leaders closely match those of the inspection team, if slightly underestimating the quality of the leadership and management, and teaching and learning. Partnerships with other schools and supporting agencies are strong and help pupils' personal development, in particular those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The impact of recent initiatives shows that the school has a good capacity to improve further. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory and the school provides sound value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportions of pupils attaining Level 5 in English, mathematics and science so that all pupils achieve well.
- Make more consistent use of assessment and tracking information to identify where achievement could be better.
- Ensure that teachers' marking consistently supports pupils' learning and helps them to understand how to improve their work.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory but have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils make satisfactory progress and generally attain above average standards by the end of Year 6. A noteworthy feature is the standard of speaking and listening, which is well above average throughout the school. However, standards by Year 6 are higher in mathematics than in English. The school is aware of this and is committed to reducing fluctuation in the end of Key Stage 2 test results and improving pupils' rate of achievement in all areas, particularly in English. An improved tracking system has been put in place to monitor pupils' progress and this is beginning to be used effectively to identify underachievement. Whereas pupils in the EIB and those in mainstream classes with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress, the progress of other groups, particularly the more able pupils, is not always as good as it could be. The very few pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve satisfactorily.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils feel valued and respected, enjoy school and behave well. They report that they feel safe in school and know just what they should do if they encounter any bullying. They trust the staff to help them if they have a problem. Pupils have sensible attitudes towards healthy eating and enjoy the activities that are available for them at playtimes. They undertake responsibilities well to help the school community, acting as school councilors, buddies and monitors. There are good links with the community and pupils are keen to raise funds for charities. Pupils' above average academic skills, together with good skills in using information and communication technology and good personal development prepare them well for their future economic well-being. Levels of attendance have risen in the last three years and are now regularly above average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning have a number of strengths. Teachers' planning is good and has improved in how well it meets pupils' individual needs. As a result, pupils enjoy the interesting range of

activities in lessons. The pace of learning is generally brisk and there are good opportunities for pupils to make a full contribution. In one Year 6 lesson, for example, pupils were given plenty of opportunities to discuss among themselves the specific features of different types of writing and to express their findings clearly. In the best lessons, the level of challenge in the work set for pupils is good. Aspects that are still developing include the marking of pupils' work and opportunities for pupils to assess their own and others' work. In general, teaching assistants support pupils' learning well. In its overall drive to promote pupils' better achievement, the school is working to improve the effectiveness of support staff in teaching small groups of pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets all requirements and is well planned. It has been developed to include a thematic approach that makes clear links between subjects to help pupils' understanding. Special events that pupils have enjoyed include a Fair Trade Day, a brain awareness week and a science show. An interesting series of visits, both day and residential, to places such as the Imperial War Museum North promote pupils' learning well. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities on offer that contribute well to pupils' personal development. Curriculum enrichment has also resulted in greater enjoyment and increased engagement from the pupils, which is evident in the good take-up of places in clubs. The school is working well in partnership with others to improve the extended provision it can offer and has opened breakfast and after-school facilities this year.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Staff at all levels are very committed to the pastoral welfare of the pupils in their care. Statutory safeguarding procedures are in place, including procedures for child protection and the safe recruitment of staff. The school keeps a very careful and well documented eye on the needs of individual pupils, especially those who are vulnerable or have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A system of detailed targets for pupils has been introduced to give pupils a better understanding of what they need to do to improve. Pupils' understanding is occasionally uncertain though better among older pupils. There is some evidence already that the whole-school system of assessing and tracking how well pupils are progressing is having a positive impact on their achievement, although the use of this information is not yet consistent.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The acting headteacher has a clear and well informed focus on raising pupils' academic achievement. To meet this aim he has created a large, cohesive and enthusiastic middle management team who provide committed and purposeful support. The acting headteacher has gained a high level of support from parents, exemplified in a comment from one that, 'He is driving the school forward and is receptive to suggestions from parents.' The acting headteacher has also successfully led the school in a very detailed exercise of self-evaluation. The result is that priorities for development are clearly identified and instigated by staff and governors. A review of the processes to assess the performance of teachers has resulted in improved teaching and learning. However, while the style of shared leadership is popular with

staff and governors, and the capacity to improve further is good, the school has yet to see the full impact of the new system for monitoring pupils' progress on standards and achievement.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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?	3

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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to thank you very much for your help when we inspected your school. We enjoyed our visit very much and I would like to share with you what we thought about your school.

Your school is giving you a satisfactory standard of education. This means there are some things that the school does well but there are other things the staff need to do to make the school better. These are some of the things that are good.

- All the staff take good care of you and help you all to be fit, safe and healthy.
- Your behaviour is good and you are growing into sensible students who take responsibilities seriously and want to learn.
- The staff teach you well and provide you with good opportunities for sports, visits, clubs after school, and to have interesting visitors.
- Pupils who find school work difficult are helped to do well by teachers and classroom assistants.
- The acting headteacher and senior staff have done lots of good things to help you to improve in your work, for example introducing 'Big Write'.

These are the things that we have asked the staff to do to improve your school.

- Make sure that as many of you as possible reach the higher Level 5 in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6.
- Make better use of the system to keep track of the progress you are making so that no pupils fall behind in their work.
- Make sure that the teachers mark your work in such a way that it helps you to see if you are achieving your targets and what you need to do to improve.

As you can see, you have a big part to play in this: know your targets, work hard in lessons and do your very best!