

# Bracken Lane Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 122560             |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | NOTTINGHAMSHIRE LA |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 314326             |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 5–6 February 2008  |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Clifford Blakemore |

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

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|---|--|
| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Primary  |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Community  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 3–11   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |  |
| School                                    | 234  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body                                     |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Mrs Jennie Heath                                       |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Mrs Amanda Richards                                    |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 24 March 2003  |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Bracken Lane<br>Retford<br>Nottinghamshire<br>DN22 7EU |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01777 705017   |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01777 705017   |

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This average sized school serves the rural market town of Retford and adjacent areas. The local community is diverse with a mixture of modern, private and rented housing. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportions of pupils who have minority ethnic heritages or who do not speak English as their first language are very low. Most pupils enter the school with attainments that are average against the national expectation for their age, whilst the proportion with general or specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs is below average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Bracken Lane School provides a good education for all its pupils, who leave the school with above average standards and are well equipped for the next stage of their education. Pupils make outstanding progress in mathematics and good progress in English and science, although their writing is not as well developed as other aspects. The school recognises that more attention needs to be given to improving writing skills, particularly of boys at Key Stage 1. Current tracking data shows that the majority of boys in Year 6 will meet or exceed national averages in writing in the current year. Pupils achieve well because teaching and the curriculum are good. Both are clearly focussed on engaging pupils actively in learning through enjoyment and making learning relevant. Most pupils find tasks demanding, yet achievable, but more able pupils are occasionally given tasks that are too easy for them. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the high quality support they get from teaching assistants. Pupils' personal development is outstanding because by the end of Key Stage 2 they are well-rounded, mature young people with a strong sense of community identity. Behaviour is excellent. Attendance is below average because some parents take term-time holidays, but the school works hard to reduce this. Pupils are knowledgeable about other cultures and understand about life in other countries, such as through links with South Africa.

Pupils rightly feel safe and are well looked-after at school because of the outstanding care, guidance and support they receive. They are known as individuals and many parents commented on how well the school deals with their particular needs. In lessons, they are encouraged to do their best and they are very well supported through the marking of work. As a result, they are fully informed about how well they are doing and the individualised targets guide them about how to improve.

The school has made good progress since it was last inspected, as a result of good leadership and management. Managers monitor pupils' progress closely and now intervene more quickly to eradicate underachievement. However, some middle managers are not yet skilled enough in using data well to set targets to bring about an increase in achievement. Managers, including governors, know the school is good, where improvements are necessary and how to bring them about. As a result the school's capacity to improve is good.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children get a good start to their education in the Foundation Stage. Several parents commented appreciatively about how much their children enjoy school. This reflects the high quality provision and care, which ensures that children settle quickly and engage happily in their learning. Nursery staff emphasise personal, social and communication skills and children's progress is particularly good in these areas. Throughout the Foundation Stage, learning is based on practical, 'hands on' activities, with plenty of opportunities for imagination and play. The current theme of Chinese New Year is extremely effective because it draws children into a wealth of well planned activities that cover all areas of learning thoroughly. The school is, rightly, seeking to improve outdoor facilities when funds allow. Nevertheless, children's overall achievement is good. From starting points that for many are in line with national expectations, most children reach or are close to the expected early learning goals by the time that they transfer to Year 1.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teachers plan tasks that are closely matched to the full range of pupils' abilities and prior attainments, particularly the more able.
- Ensure middle managers use data to set targets that impact on the raising of standards and achievement further.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Standards in core subjects are above average overall and pupils of all abilities achieve well. In 2007, standards in Key Stage 1 were broadly average overall, but an improvement on the 2006 results. Tracking for current year groups indicates that progress is accelerating and standards are starting to rise again following a dip in 2006. This is evident in Key Stage 2, where most pupils have made rapid advances in all core subjects to reach the nationally expected level or above. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2007 were well above average in mathematics. Standards in English and science were above average. The school has rightly identified the need to improve pupils' writing skills, which are not up to the same high standard as their reading and mathematical skills. Whole school strategies have been implemented and the improved consistency in approach is having a positive effect on raising standards of writing in Year 6.

By the end of Key Stage 1, standards in reading and writing are below average, with boys achieving less well than girls, particularly in writing. At the end of Key Stage 2, boys achieve higher than girls in English. The progress in boys' achievement in English is reflected in the higher standards reached in 2007. The improvement is due to the school's monitoring of progress, the setting of individual language targets and to improvements in the curriculum.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They say they thoroughly enjoy school because, 'There are lots of fun lessons'. They relate extremely well to staff and fellow pupils and their behaviour is excellent. By the time that they leave, most are mature and confident. They show this in conscientious working habits and by rising to the challenge of demanding tasks. This quality of response adds to pupils' learning and achievement. As a result, they are well-prepared for secondary education and the world of work. Pupils are sensitive to things of beauty, have good insights into human emotions and act on an understanding of what is right. The school's special events that focus on world cultures have a strong impact on them. They deepen pupils' understanding of moral, social and cultural issues and, along with the school's developing link with a school in the Zulu heartland of South Africa, prepare them really well for life in a multi-cultural society.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy learning because lessons engage them in a variety of practical and real-life activities. Year 6 pupils described a mathematics lesson as 'fun' when set tasks to calculate measurement of the height of trees, which resulted in them making outstanding progress. Teachers use

resources well, particularly computers to research topics and present work. Learning proceeds smoothly because teachers direct pupils' enthusiasm well and maintain high standards of discipline. Work is carefully assessed and pupils know how to improve because they are set challenging targets. These are reviewed regularly and this leads to pupils making rapid progress. In the most effective lessons, teachers plan challenging tasks, set a brisk pace and capture the interest of pupils. In a small minority of lessons, however, teachers do not expect enough of more able pupils because tasks are too easy and undemanding. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, on the other hand, are well met because teaching assistants do a particularly good job in ensuring they make the same good progress as most other learners.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum places emphasis on promoting literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills, which, alongside a strong focus on personal, social, health and citizenship education, results in good academic standards and exceptional levels of personal development. The curriculum is organised around well planned units of work that allow staff to devote quality time to particular subjects or cross curricular themes. This results in good standards in creative and aesthetic subjects, because it is firmly based on pupils learning and applying skills. Highly effective cross-curricular links make pupils' learning both relevant and appealing. The school has been forward looking by providing French for pupils in Key Stage 2 and it enriches their experience of other cultures. The curriculum is enhanced with a good range of educational visits, visitors and special events, which bring learning to life and add much to pupils' enjoyment of learning. The school modifies its curriculum effectively to meet the needs of most learners and, within this, is developing sound provision for those who have special talents.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Standards of care, guidance and support are outstanding. Pupils thrive in the school's extremely positive atmosphere. Pastoral care is excellent because teachers and supervisory staff use an effective range of checks to keep track of pupils' personal and emotional well-being and respond promptly to their needs. Pupils are kind to one another and staff are good at sorting out any problems that arise. There are rigorous arrangements for safeguarding pupils. Checks on the suitability of staff, and procedures and staff training for child protection are thorough, up-to-date and meet current requirements. Staff set targets to promote pupils' progress and, through constructive marking and on-going dialogue, ensure that pupils understand how to improve and are well motivated to succeed. Observation and assessment lead to early diagnosis of pupils whose progress may be slowing and the school is quick to put effective systems in place to support them.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The leadership of the school is characterised by a shared vision to raise standards and provide the best possible care for pupils. The headteacher has clear aspirations for the school and works hard to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they possibly can. The remodelled management team has clearly defined roles. This has resulted in a sharper focus on raising standards and

achievement so that the minority who have underachieved in the past are now making more rapid progress. School self-evaluation is outstanding. Checks are regularly carried out on teaching and accurately evaluate its quality. Targets are demanding, and staff and pupils rise to meet them, but the high quality target setting that is evident is not consistently well developed across all year groups and among middle managers. The school is highly effective in helping pupils to develop outstanding attitudes to learning and in promoting their initiative and responsibility in the community, such as visiting hospitals and the elderly. Communication with parents is regular so they know how well their children are doing. As a result the school is well supported by, and has the confidence of parents. One parent commented, 'My child has made rapid advances in reading because her need was identified early and well supported'. Governors work very closely with the school and are fully informed about standards. They fulfil their statutory duties effectively.

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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 |
|---|----------------|

### Overall effectiveness

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2   |
| 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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage   | 2   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements   | 2   |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |
|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve?  | 2 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

|   |   |
|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?                                  | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles   | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices   | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education   | 1 |
| The attendance of learners  | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners   | 1 |
| 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?   | 1 |

<sup>1</sup> 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**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 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  | 2   |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 1   |
| 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**

7 February 2008

Dear Children,

Inspection of Bracken Lane Primary and Nursery School, Retford, Nottinghamshire DN22 7EU

Thank you very much for being so polite to us when we came to visit your school. You made our work much easier by being so honest when you told us about your life at school. We were most impressed by your exceptional behaviour in lessons and at playtime and the way you work hard in lessons. You deserve praise for your very good attitudes to school.

You told us that you like coming to school, and said 'learning is fun' and we can see why. The teachers take good care of you and make sure you stay safe at school. You have lots of friends, get on well with the teachers, and like all the extra clubs and activities you can do, especially the sports clubs that help you to keep fit.

We found you are getting a good education, and doing as well as we would expect you to. You are very good at mathematics, but your writing could be better. The teachers often let you work things out for yourselves, but the most able learners among you sometimes find the work a bit easy. We have asked the teachers to check that, when they give you a task, it is just hard enough for everyone in the class.

The school has steadily been getting better, because the staff and adults who work at your school know exactly what needs improving. To help your school improve quicker we suggest your teachers could set you clearly laid out targets to quickly improve your school.

With all best wishes for your future

Clifford Blakemore

(Lead Inspector)