

Brickhill Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109503
Local Authority	Bedford
Inspection number	337304
Inspection dates	15–16 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Steven Hill

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	277
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Caroline Romans
Headteacher	Vyveanne Francis
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2006
School address	Dove Road Brickhill Bedford
Telephone number	01234 401404
Fax number	01234 401405
Email address	brickhill@deal.bedfordshire.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. About 40% of the time was spent observing learning directly. Ten teachers were observed in 17 lessons. Meetings were held with staff, governors, groups of pupils and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, concentrating on that related to safeguarding, pupils' progress and the care of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Questionnaires were analysed from staff, pupils and 102 parents.

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

- whether pupils make enough progress at Key Stage 2
- if boys and girls make similarly good progress
- whether pupils learn enough about the different cultures throughout the world
- to what extent middle managers are involved in monitoring provision and outcomes.

Information about the school

This is an average sized school in a suburban area of Bedford. Just over half the pupils are of White British origin, with the rest coming from a wide range of different minority ethnic heritages. Only a small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language, and very few are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school provides a morning club and an after-school club for pupils, which are managed by the governing body. The school provides for Early Years Foundation Stage children from the age of four in a large Reception unit.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school, which enables pupils to make good progress and reach standards that are above average. All groups of pupils achieve well regardless of gender, ability or ethnicity. This is largely because of consistently good teaching throughout the school. A new and exciting approach to the curriculum makes very good links between different subjects, and has enhanced pupils' interest and enthusiasm for learning.

Pupils greatly enjoy school and feel very safe and secure. Boys and girls from different ethnic groups get on well together, and their behaviour is excellent. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They have very good collaborative skills and show high levels of independence when appropriate. Their understanding of, and respect for, a wide range of cultures from around the world is now excellent, having been a weak area at the last inspection. They are thoughtful about values, respect rules and show a mature approach to moral issues. The school's outstanding provision for care, guidance and support is a major factor in these very positive outcomes. Positive values and respect for everyone are stressed and reinforced consistently. Pupils themselves are consulted about their views and are confident that these are valued and acted upon. Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are given excellent support. The school makes exceptionally good use of partnerships with other schools, agencies and the local authority to help them tailor provision to individuals' needs. Children get a good start to their education in the Reception unit, where provision has been greatly improved. They settle happily and make good progress. However, the accommodation is limited, particularly outdoors, which makes it difficult for staff to promote learning equally well in all areas of learning.

The successful provision is a direct result of good leadership and management. Significant improvements have been made to the curriculum, monitoring and assessment. Middle leaders now play a full part in monitoring provision and pupils' standards. New systems of assessment give a more accurate view of pupils' progress in each class in English and mathematics. The new management structure, with area-of-learning teams, is proving very successful in helping teachers work together to make improvements, particularly in extending the curriculum. Staff are working hard to devise a system to gauge the impact of this creative curriculum on standards in different subjects. However, the interim arrangements for this are somewhat cumbersome and time-consuming, and do not give leaders a clear enough view of progress across the school, except in English and mathematics. The many improvements made in the last few years, the accurate identification of what needs doing next based on robust monitoring of the school's work, and the united vision and positive teamwork of staff and governors, show that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Upgrade the accommodation in the Reception unit, particularly with regard to the facilities available outdoors, and make more consistent use of the outdoor provision to promote equal progress in all areas of learning.
- Evaluate the impact of the new curriculum arrangements on standards by devising robust and manageable systems to assess and record pupils' progress in different subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Standards in English and mathematics are consistently above average at the end of Year 2, and remain ahead of local authority averages at the end of Year 4. All pupils achieve well and make good progress. There is no significant variance in the progress of different ethnic groups, and a previous shortfall in boys' progress compared to girls has been eliminated. Pupils' very good speaking and listening skills make a strong contribution to their learning in many different subject areas. Pupils discuss issues sensibly and with enjoyment. Those pupils who find academic work difficult make similarly good progress to their classmates because of the extra help they receive. Pupils greatly enjoy both learning and their social involvement in school life, and this is reflected in their above-average attendance.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of keeping safe and take an active part in promoting safety. They contribute well to the community, particularly through the way they help and support each other in class and outside. The school council members make a strong contribution to school life, and have undertaken their own risk assessments of the premises, for example. Pupils understand the school's rules and values and follow them very well, encouraging each other to maintain very high standards of behaviour in lessons and around the school. They are enthusiastic about exercise, participating actively in physical education lessons, and after-school sports clubs are very popular. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy eating, although their own choices are not always of the healthy options. Their good skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), and their very positive attitudes to work, prepare them well for their future lives in school and beyond.

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.

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

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Lessons are well managed and orderly so that learning is consistently good. Positive relationships, clear expectations and interesting activities ensure pupils are enthusiastic about learning and try hard. Teachers make good use of the increasingly accurate assessment information to match work to the needs of individuals and groups. Skilled teaching assistants provide good support to pupils who struggle academically or socially. This means that everyone is fully included and is able to achieve well. Teachers are particularly skilled in ensuring that all pupils are actively involved in lessons so that their concentration is good. Very effective opportunities are provided for collaborative work and discussion in pairs, which makes a very positive impact on pupils' personal development. This also develops pupils' speaking and listening skills extremely well, and contributes to their learning in a variety of subjects. Teachers provide very clear criteria for success, so pupils have a good understanding of how they can improve and have very good skills in assessing their own performance. Marking is good and linked to the success criteria, although occasionally teachers do not follow up comments in later work.

The new approach to the curriculum has been very enthusiastically embraced by pupils, who greatly enjoy the topics they study. Teachers make good links between different subjects so that pupils gain knowledge in depth and their learning in each area reinforces progress in other areas. Staff are now working to embed these changes and ensure that the curriculum is a coherent whole. Pupils have very extensive opportunities to learn about a variety of cultures, which has greatly increased their understanding. The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage has worked very effectively with

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

colleagues to modify the curriculum in Year 1 to ensure that the transition to Key Stage 1 is seamless. A wide variety of clubs contributes to pupils' enthusiasm and enjoyment, as well as their skills. The development of the outstanding school garden has contributed very well to pupils' personal and academic learning.

The excellent care, guidance and support provided for pupils underpins much of their academic as well as their personal development. Pupils with particular personal, medical or emotional needs are given extensive help that is matched carefully to their individual requirements. Extremely good use is made of external support to enhance the expertise of school staff and help them do this particularly well. The many ways in which the school takes note of pupils' own views in planning provision greatly enhances how they feel cared for and valued in the school. The outstanding level of care is complemented by the warm and welcoming ethos in the morning and after-school clubs, which help those pupils who attend to develop both academically and socially.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has led a very cohesive team of staff in making improvements since the last inspection. Much improved monitoring, with the results shared among all concerned, has enabled teachers to refine their teaching and led to the consistently good learning in lessons. Self-evaluation is good, so that issues are identified accurately and addressed systematically. The governing body has a very clear understanding of the school and is effectively holding it to account for its performance. Good links are made with parents and the school works hard and successfully to increase their involvement in school. An unusually high proportion of parents and carers help out in school, for example, and the range of communication with them is being extended. Managers make exceptionally good use of a range of other partnerships to enhance pupils' learning and personal development. The improved tracking systems support the good promotion of equal opportunities. Any individuals or groups who are in danger of lagging behind are identified, and action is taken to enhance their progress. A slight under-performance of girls in mathematics, for example, has been addressed. Changes to the curriculum have been made after consulting extensively with the girls themselves about how they learn in mathematics. Safeguarding procedures are extremely thorough and meet national requirements. A particular strength is the consultation with both pupils and parents to identify any possible issues and address them. A very organised approach to community

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

cohesion means that it is good and improving. Good links locally with a variety of faith groups and other organisations complement the excellent harmony within the school community. Links have been extended to a variety of contacts overseas, and are increasing across the rest of this country.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good leadership has led to extensive work to improve provision since the last inspection, and this has successfully enhanced children's learning. The key stage leader provides a clear sense of direction based on a comprehensive analysis of performance and thorough planning for the future. Better provision for learning outdoors has rightly been identified as the main priority for development. The adults have worked successfully to provide a stimulating and welcoming environment for children within the limitations of the accommodation. Children's attainment when they start in Reception is variable, but is generally in line with national expectations or slightly above. Good teaching from all the adults ensures that children make good progress, so that standards at the start of Year 1 are above average. Children make particularly good progress in their early literacy skills, helped by a strong and successful focus on learning about letters and sounds. Standards have not been as high in physical development as in other aspects, and this is linked to shortcomings in the outdoor learning area. Despite this relative shortcoming, leadership has ensured that the learning and welfare requirements for the Early Years Foundation Stage are met well. The adults monitor children's achievements rigorously, and use the information gained to plan the next steps in their learning.

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

Children enjoy their time in Reception because they know they are safe and well cared for by staff.

Young children who attend the morning or after school clubs enjoy themselves and feel safe and secure. Older children are kind to them and help them in their play. A variety of activities are well planned to enhance progress in all areas of learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers are happy with their children's education. They particularly value that their children are happy and safe at school, the quality of teaching and how well the school is led and managed. A few had concerns about their children's progress and the information they receive about this. The inspection found that progress is good for all groups, and that the information given to parents is good in comparison to schools generally. A few parents and carers expressed some concerns about how behavioural problems are handled, and how individual children's needs are met. The inspection evidence showed that behaviour is generally excellent and that any problems are handled sensitively and effectively. Pupils themselves expressed great confidence that the teachers always resolve out any problems that arise. The inspectors found that the school has good systems to meet the academic needs of individuals, and exceptionally good procedures to deal with pupils' personal or emotional needs.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Brickhill Lower 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 102 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 277 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	50	49	49	48	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	52	51	44	43	3	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	27	26	66	64	6	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	35	55	54	5	5	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	38	37	60	59	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	32	62	61	3	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	25	72	71	3	3	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)	27	26	58	57	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	32	31	56	55	7	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	30	60	59	6	6	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	33	58	57	2	2	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	55	54	38	37	2	2	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	38	37	57	56	2	2	1	1

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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:	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ 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.



17 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brickhill Lower School, Bedford, MK41 7AA

Thank you for all your help when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and watching you at work in lessons. You told us that Brickhill is a good school, and you are right. You are all making good progress because teachers are good at helping you to learn. The adults keep a careful eye on how everyone is getting on and make sure that they give extra help to anyone who needs it. They look after you really well, so that you are safe and happy in school. We were pleased to see that your behaviour is excellent, and that you are friendly, polite and helpful to each other.

The adults have worked very hard to give you a better curriculum, with some really exciting topics to study, which you are obviously enjoying. We have agreed with the headteacher that the teachers are going to work out better systems to keep track of how you are all getting on when the subjects are mixed up like this.

The youngest children really enjoy themselves in the Reception classes, and they are making good progress, although at the moment they do better inside than out. We have agreed with the adults that the outdoor area is going to be improved, and they already have plans of how to do this.

The adults are good at organising the school so everything runs smoothly, and they are keen to make it even better. You can help by keeping up your hard work and good behaviour. We hope you carry on enjoying school.

Yours sincerely

Steven Hill

Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.