

Broom Barns Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117189
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	358103
Inspection dates	11–12 November 2010
Reporting inspector	George Logan

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	224
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jason Creasey
Headteacher	Tina Jarman
Date of previous school inspection	19 June 2008
School address	Homestead Moat Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG1 1UE
Telephone number	01438 354913
Fax number	01438 722652
Email address	admin@broombarns.herts.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 16 lessons taught by eight different members of staff. Inspectors held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and pupils. They looked at pupils' books, records of their progress, lesson planning, playtime activities and the school's self-evaluation documents, including records of teaching and the main improvement plan. Responses to questionnaires completed by staff, pupils and 61 parents and carers were also considered.

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

- How far advanced are children when they enter the Nursery class and how much progress do they make in the Early Years Foundation Stage?
- How well do staff use assessment to plan work which challenges pupils sufficiently, particularly boys, younger pupils in mathematics and older pupils in writing?
- What strategies has the school planned to deal with issues around pupils' attendance?
- To what extent have governors met their obligations in relation to community cohesion?

Information about the school

Broom Barns Community Primary School is of similar size to most primary schools. Although most pupils are of a White British heritage, the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups has increased steadily in recent years. However, there are no pupils in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. Almost all children now enter the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Nursery class. The Nursery class operates only in the mornings. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The majority of these have moderate learning difficulties, speech and language difficulties or behavioural, emotional or social issues. A small number of pupils have more profound physical and learning needs. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The school provides breakfast and after-school clubs. These are managed by the governing body.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school which is improving securely and rapidly. It strongly promotes pupils' personal development. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave well. They show respect for adults and for each other. Staff are committed to ensuring pupils' safety and well-being. They provide good pastoral support for those who have identified special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils feel very safe and know that they can rely on adults should they feel threatened. They have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. While pupils' contribution to the school is good, links with the local community are more limited. There are relatively few opportunities to embed community cohesion through increased engagement with diverse ethnic or religious groups at national or international levels.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. However, this is an improving picture. Standards have risen significantly in the last year and are now broadly average by the end of Year 6. The current attainment of older year groups suggests that this improvement is sustainable. Pupils' skills are better developed, and their progress is more consistent in reading and writing than in mathematics. This reflects the impact of recent intensive input to raise attainment in writing.

In general, older pupils make the most sustained progress. Children make steady progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, although outcomes, particularly in reading and writing, are still below those expected when they enter Year 1. Though progress is inconsistent in Years 1 and 2, attainment is, in most years, broadly average by the end of Year 2. As the teaching team has stabilised, supported by a well-established tracking system, the level of challenge has increased in Years 4 to 6 and this has helped to drive up attainment. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make at least satisfactory progress. Some, with more profound needs, do better than this because they receive good support. The curriculum promotes literacy skills increasingly well. Numeracy skills are less well supported. Individual writing targets show pupils how to make improvements to their work.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Despite this, attendance is low. Poor attendance by a small number of identified pupils, together with holidays taken in term-time, depresses the overall figures. Even so, progress is improving steadily and the school has good systems in place to challenge irregular attendance. School leaders have an incisive understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Self-evaluation is thorough and accurate. The governing body is active and committed, but does not yet challenge school leaders sufficiently. The headteacher's success in tackling embedded underperformance, improving teaching and progress across the school, higher standards, a restructured and increasingly effective senior leadership team, together with rigorous

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procedures for monitoring the school's work and pupils' progress, indicate that the school has good capacity for improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils make more rapid progress in mathematics and attain at higher levels, particularly in Years 1 and 2.
- Seek, in cooperation with parents and carers, to reduce excessive casual absences from school and to increase overall levels of attendance.
- Improve community cohesion by:
 - developing meaningful links with schools and communities within the United Kingdom and internationally
 - further extending pupils' knowledge of cultures, religions and beliefs other than their own.
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Children's skills on entry to Nursery are lower than is usual for their age, particularly early language and literacy skills. Attainment remains relatively low by the end of Reception, other than in children's personal development outcomes. Progress across the school has been satisfactory in most years. Nevertheless, more rigorous teaching and higher staff expectations are enabling older pupils in particular to make more rapid gains in learning. Progress is now good for some older pupils, including the more able, while there has been a significant rise in attainment. The historic gap in attainment between boys and girls has narrowed significantly. Although attainment in mathematics has improved to be broadly average, progress remains inconsistent, with relatively slow progress in some years and rapid catch-up in others. The school has invested heavily in information and communication technology (ICT). However, the impact of ICT on everyday learning is limited.

Pupils' enthusiasm is built upon more effectively in some lessons than others. In a successful literacy lesson in Year 4, pupils were engaged by the pace and enthusiasm which the teacher brought to the session. Pupils' resulting sustained commitment ensured that learning was at least good. A similar approach, in a literacy lesson in Year 5 on developing writing skills, also led to a high level of engagement by pupils and some good progress and outcomes. In other lessons, particularly with younger pupils, pace and challenge were less evident. As a result, learning was not so strong.

Pupils are generally keen to learn and respond well to challenges. Though some need a lot of reassurance, they mostly work well in pairs and small groups. On occasion, introductions to lessons are quite lengthy and this inhibits learning. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties make steady progress when taught in small groups, because staff match work closely to their precise needs. The focus on evaluating their own work is helping to increase pupils' awareness of how well they are doing and this, together with

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more effective marking of written work, particularly writing, is contributing to better learning.

Pupils' personal development is a strength. Pupils treat each other, and adults, politely. Although there is scope for further development, the school council meets regularly and organises fund-raising activities. Older pupils willingly undertake a range of community jobs, such as prefects, play leaders and mediators. Although multicultural awareness is not systematically developed, spiritual, social and moral development is good. Adequately developed basic skills ensure that pupils are satisfactorily prepared for future study and later life.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Although still uneven, pupils' learning and progress has strengthened considerably, particularly in Years 4 to 6. In several lessons of the lessons observed during the inspection, teaching was good. The teaching of the older pupils is strongest and most consistent. Staff expectations there are high and this is promoting effective learning. Across the school, relationships are a strength. Planning indicates that activities are well matched to pupils' needs. More rigorous evaluation of progress data, more challenging targets and greater accountability are all contributing to better progress. Teachers question pupils closely to ensure that they have understood key ideas. Although practice is variable, some pupils make good use of self-evaluation strategies, both oral and written.

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Teachers' marking, which is exemplary in the feedback it offers on extended writing tasks, together with individual writing targets, provides guidance for pupils on the next steps in their learning. Marking and target-setting in other subjects, including mathematics, is more variable in quality. Overall, these strategies contribute increasingly effectively to improved progress.

The curriculum satisfactorily supports the development of pupils' literacy skills. It promotes their mathematical skills less effectively. Personal, social, health and citizenship education is carefully planned. The development of a skills-based curriculum is providing more interesting opportunities for learning, with regular themed events. Pupils increasingly use their writing and mathematical skills in other subjects, although recorded work in science is currently limited. External partnership activities contribute well to extending pupils' learning. These include events to support gifted and talented pupils, although this provision is in its early stages. Extra-curricular provision and enrichment opportunities are satisfactory.

Staff care for pupils well and are very responsive to their needs. The breakfast and after-school clubs are well organised and meet the needs of pupils well, including children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Transition arrangements are good. The school works closely with support agencies, particularly for pupils with specific, and sometimes profound, needs. There is good practice in supporting the health, social, behavioural and transition needs of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. The skills of teaching and learning support staff with good understanding of, for example, autistic spectrum disorders or Downs Syndrome, are used well to promote pupils' learning and well-being.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides effective and committed leadership. She has successfully sustained those aspects of provision which ensure that pupils are cared for well and which support good personal development. Crucially, she has also challenged significant areas of underperformance. There is now a rigorous approach to tracking pupils' progress. The appointment of staff with required skills has strengthened the teaching. The restructuring of the senior leadership team with clear lines of accountability is nearing completion, with the appointment of an inclusion manager, an Early Years Foundation Stage leader and a new deputy headteacher. As a result, significant improvements in pupils' learning and attainment are now coming through. School self-evaluation is incisive and accurate. The school development plan is sharply focused on those areas where improvement is needed.

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The headteacher has a very close knowledge of the strengths of the teaching and is working hard to raise the quality of teaching, particularly with the less experienced staff.

The governing body is closely involved in monitoring aspects of the school's work and, as a result of the information it receives, understands where improvement is needed, although, governors are less confident in challenging school leaders. Statutory responsibilities are fully met. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are good. Discrimination is tackled rigorously and the promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory, as reflected in students' achievement. The school is internally cohesive, although links with the local community are more restricted. There are some opportunities to learn about other faiths and communities through the curriculum and visitors to school. Provision is limited in relation to more diverse communities either within the United Kingdom or globally.

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's skills and knowledge on entry to Nursery are generally below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. Good induction arrangements ensure that children feel safe. In both Nursery and Reception classes, children are well cared for and establish good relationships with adults and other children. Children are polite, play together confidently and safely, behave well and have the confidence to ask for help when they need it. This contributes well to their good social development.

Children begin to develop independence in their learning through, for example, self-registration. Overall, children make satisfactory progress in their learning, although progress is slightly faster in Nursery than in Reception. By the time they enter Year 1 their skills and knowledge remain below the level expected, particularly in reading and writing.

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Outcomes in personal and social development are higher. While children's skills in reading and writing are adequately supported by a systematic programme for teaching sounds and letters, focused teaching in this area, particularly in Reception, is not always given enough priority. Sessions of direct teaching are sometimes brief and do not offer sufficient sustained challenge, and this limits the impact, particularly for the more-able children. While children have opportunities to make choices, both indoor and out, outdoor provision in Reception is less well developed and stimulating than in the Nursery. Resources generally interest children and meet their learning needs.

Most areas of learning are planned for appropriately in the detailed weekly planning. Regular assessments provide satisfactory information on children's progress. The analysis of entry data is very new and, until now, staff have not been in a position to track closely the progress of all groups of children and evaluate accurately the pace of their learning. The recently appointed Early Years Foundation Stage leader has an accurate view of what needs to be done to improve provision further and plans are in place to ensure that this happens.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are pleased with the school and what it offers their children. One said, 'My child has grown in confidence since coming here and looks forward to going to school every day.' A very small minority of parents and carers had concerns, relating mainly to the progress their children are making, the school's response to parents' suggestions or to the effectiveness of communication. The school itself recognises, and the inspection concurs, that the rate of pupils' progress, although satisfactory overall, has not been consistent enough, particularly in mathematics. It is, however, improving steadily, so that, in the last school year, standards rose significantly and progress for several groups of pupils in Year 6, particularly the most able, was good. The school has provided the inspection team with evidence that it surveys parents and carers regularly and encourages an open dialogue with them. The school feels that it is responsive to parents' suggestions where these are reasonable and practicable and that it provides good support for both pupils and their families. The efficiency of day-to-day communications appears to be at least as good as in most schools.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Broom Barns Community Primary 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 61 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 224 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	57	23	38	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	29	48	31	51	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	18	30	39	64	3	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	12	20	42	69	6	10	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	14	23	44	72	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	26	38	62	7	11	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	28	41	67	2	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)	11	18	47	77	3	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	28	40	66	3	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	26	35	57	4	7	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	20	38	62	6	10	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	15	25	36	59	5	8	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	18	30	38	62	2	3	1	2

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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 pupils' 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.



12 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Broom Barns Community Primary School, Stevenage,

SG1 1UE

Thank you for making us welcome during our recent visit. We enjoyed meeting you in lessons and around the school, and hearing your views. We found that, while yours is a satisfactory school, it is improving steadily. These are our main findings.

You work hard, enjoy lessons and behave well.

You make satisfactory progress overall and attainment is now broadly average by the end of Year 6. Writing has improved considerably. Currently, progress is more rapid in reading and writing than in mathematics.

You undertake many jobs in school. While you make a good contribution to the school, links with the local community are not so strong.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with some good lessons.

Most of you feel very safe and have a good awareness of the importance of eating healthily and staying fit.

The curriculum is satisfactory. Writing is taught well; extra-curricular provision is satisfactory.

School leaders set a clear direction for the school, know exactly how well it is doing and ensure that you are well looked after.

We are asking the school to make these changes so that you can do even better. It should:

- help you to make more rapid progress and reach higher standards in mathematics
- work with parents and carers to ensure that you all attend school as often as possible
- establish meaningful links with other communities and faith groups within the United Kingdom and globally.

You can help by continuing to work hard and do your best. We hope that you will have every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

George Logan

Lead inspector

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