

Broom Barns Junior Mixed and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117189
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	312527
Inspection date	19 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Mary Summers

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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	221
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Jason Creasey
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Wesley
Date of previous school inspection	18 April 2005
School address	Homestead Moat Stevenage Hertfordshire SG1 1UE
Telephone number	01438 354913
Fax number	01438 722652

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and focused on the following issues:

- pupils' achievement in Year 6 during this school year
- the quality of teaching and support for pupils with learning difficulties
- the way that information and communication technology (ICT) is used in different subjects.

The inspector gathered evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and school documents. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils, the headteacher, staff and the chair of governors also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessment, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Most of the pupils who attend Broom Barns come from the immediate area, although a few travel from further afield. It is a popular school with a waiting list for the Nursery. The vast majority of pupils come from White British families, with only a few coming from minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few speak English as an additional language. An average proportion of pupils need support with their learning for mainly behavioural, speech, language and moderate learning difficulties. The number entitled to free school meals is also about average. The school has links with a number of local external agencies, including a Sports Partnership and an Extended Schools Consortium. It gained Healthy Schools status and the Basic Skills Quality Mark in 2007.

Children start school in the Nursery at levels that are below average for their age, and sometimes lower than this in communication, language and literacy, mathematical understanding and in personal, social and emotional development.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Broom Barns provides a good education for its pupils. They benefit greatly from a calm and caring environment that values all pupils and enables them to achieve well. Pupils really enjoy school, especially when activities are exciting and practical. The school has focused on improving writing this year and pupils report how much they now enjoy writing activities because they are relevant and stimulating. The school is successfully developing pupils' vocabulary and confidence in language through the use of drama. During inspection, the Year 2 assembly, which included a short play, showed pupils speaking confidently and clearly and using a wide range of appropriate vocabulary.

Pupils reach broadly average standards at the end of Years 2 and 6. This represents good achievement since they started school in the Nursery. Standards have risen steadily in Year 2 from below average in 2004, to average levels at the current time. Standards have fluctuated in Year 6, with a sharp rise last year to above average levels. Recent assessments suggest that the current cohort will reach average levels, but this still represents good progress from their starting points. Progress in writing this year has been especially good because of more creative teaching. Standards in mathematics are not as high as in English and science. The school has rightly identified this as an area for improvement next year, especially in the level of challenge for pupils.

Pupils with behaviour, speech, language and moderate learning difficulties are supported very well. Teaching assistants make a considerable contribution to their progress in lessons and in groups outside the class. They cater for pupils sensitively, while ensuring that they meet their learning objectives. Pupils for whom English is an additional language also benefit from effective support, which helps them make good progress.

Teaching is good throughout the school. Teachers know their pupils well and plan lessons that engage their interest and motivate them to work hard. They manage pupils' behaviour extremely well, so that there is a calm atmosphere for learning and minimal disruption in lessons. Displays are bright, stimulating and value pupils' efforts as well as supporting the school's positive learning ethos. The school has developed the use of ICT well since the last inspection when it was identified as an area for improvement. Pupils now receive two lessons a week in the computer suite, one to learn basic ICT skills and one to enable them to use these skills in other subjects. Year 4 pupils for example designed a poster to illustrate their work on World War II. The work generally matches most pupils' needs well, although at times there are missed opportunities to stretch the highest attainers.

A lively curriculum caters effectively for pupils' personal as well as their academic development. Subjects are linked together successfully through themes, which makes learning more relevant for pupils. Instrumental music tuition is provided in Years 3 and 4, which enables pupils to learn basic notation and skills as well as the benefits of working as a group. The curriculum is adapted well to meet the needs of most pupils but provision for gifted and talented pupils is at the very early stages of development.

Pupils are very well cared for and safeguarding procedures are secure. Attendance has improved significantly and is satisfactory. This is due to better systems to monitor and follow up absence. Teachers assess progress in all subjects on a regular basis. Senior managers monitor this information carefully and set challenging yet achievable targets for improvement. Although pupils in Year 6 have a clear idea of the levels at which they are working, younger pupils are

not so sure. All appreciate the way in which teachers mark their work, providing helpful hints for improvement.

Pupils' personal development and well being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. An additional teaching assistant on duty at lunchtimes helps them to sort out any differences of opinion so that conflict is avoided. Pupils have an excellent understanding about healthy lifestyles and enjoy the fruit provided at playtimes and the nutritious school lunches. They understand about the dangers of drugs and know how to keep safe from bullying although they say this is rare. They appreciate why access to the internet is monitored carefully by teachers to ensure their safety. Pupils accept responsibilities enthusiastically, helping younger children in the dining hall and arranging chairs for assembly. They are proud of the work they do on the school council and of the impact they have had on improvements to facilities in the playground. All these qualities, coupled with the standards that they reach and the good progress that they make, means that pupils develop skills well for the next stage of their education.

The headteacher leads the school well and her drive and vision have resulted in improvements in many aspects of school life, which have contributed to pupils' good achievement. All the issues identified at the last inspection have been addressed effectively. School performance is analysed extremely well and prompt action taken to address areas of weakness. Senior staff are involved closely in monitoring and reviewing the school's work and planning for the future. Governors support this process well, gaining clear information on which to base decisions about the future. There is a good sense of team work amongst staff, with teachers reflecting carefully about their work and supporting one another effectively. The school is well placed to continue to improve in the future.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes because of the good range of learning opportunities that teachers provide to gain their interest and foster their independence. Children enjoy the theme-based units of work on for example 'minibeasts' and 'water', which involve lots of practical opportunities for them to become more involved in their learning. Activities led by adults focus well on key learning points. However, the activities chosen by children are sometimes not organised carefully enough in the Nursery, to ensure that all children make the best possible progress.

There is a good focus on developing language and literacy skills from the earliest days. A new phonics programme in Reception has shown a marked impact on children's writing skills. By the time they transfer to Year 1, children have made good progress. They reach expected levels for their age in many areas of learning, although they are still below average in writing, calculation and social development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics, especially the level of challenge in pupils' work.
- Extend the provision for gifted and talented pupils and particularly the level of challenge for the highest attainers in lessons.

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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?	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 ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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?	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?	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	2
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

20 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Broom Barns Junior Mixed and Infant School, Stevenage, SG1 1UE

I really enjoyed visiting your school recently. Thank you for being so polite and friendly and telling me about what you do at school. Now it is my turn to write and tell you what I found out.

Yours is a good school. All the adults look after you carefully so that you feel safe and happy. Lessons are interesting and I was pleased to see how much progress you had made in writing this year. You achieve well because of the good teaching you get in lessons. The people in charge have some good ideas about how to make things even better for you.

There is one more strength that I have not yet mentioned and that is you! I was impressed by your enthusiasm, good behaviour and manners. You have a really good understanding about how to keep fit and healthy by eating the right foods and taking enough exercise. It was great to see how involved you are in your own learning and how much you value and respond to teachers' marking in your books. You attend regularly so that you can get the most out of school.

It was good to hear that most of you really enjoy school. However, a few of you need even more challenging work and activities to make sure you reach your full potential. I have asked the teachers to try to organise this for you. I also think you could reach higher standards in mathematics, so the teachers will be making sure that mathematics lessons really challenge you to work hard and make even better progress.

I know you will want to play your part in helping the school to improve by continuing to work hard and behave well. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs M Summers

Lead inspector