

Burnley Lowerhouse Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119215
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	358516
Inspection dates	4–5 April 2011
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Hemmings

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 of pupils on the school roll	146
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Johnson
Headteacher	Mr Domonic Conti
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors who visited 11 lessons or parts of lessons. The inspectors observed seven teachers and held discussions with members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils and the School Improvement Partner. They observed the school's work, and looked at school policies, records of meetings of the governing body, assessment information and curriculum planning. In addition, 30 responses to parents' and carers' questionnaires were received and analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The impact of action taken to accelerate progress and raise attainment in writing and mathematics.
- Whether planning meets the needs of different groups of pupils.
- The extent to which procedures for checking pupils' progress has improved since the last inspection.
- How effectively leadership and management responsibilities are delegated amongst staff.

Information about the school

Burnley Lowerhouse is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The school has gained the Activemark Award and holds Healthy School status.

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

3

Main findings

Lowerhouse is a satisfactory school. It is improving and has a variety of strengths. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work well together and have been central to this improvement clarifying the school's vision for further development. The school has benefited from a support programme with the local authority over the last eighteen months to accelerate progress and raise attainment in English and mathematics. As a result, increasing numbers of pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress. Leadership responsibilities have been equally delegated amongst staff, though not all subject leaders have expertise in evaluating learning and provision in their subjects. The school now has an accurate view of strengths and areas to develop. Plans for development reflect what needs to be done although a track record of success is not yet fully evident. Consequently, the capacity for improvement is satisfactory.

Pupils make satisfactory progress and attain broadly average standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. The school has successfully improved pupils' handwriting and their accuracy in constructing and punctuating sentences. It has been less successful in developing pupils' ability to write independently at length to express their ideas creatively across the curriculum. Pupils' mathematical calculation skills have been improved and these are now secure. Their ability to apply these skills to solve number problems in real-life contexts is less well developed. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same progress as other pupils because of the extra support they receive.

The school is a friendly and welcoming place. Behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school, feel safe and know how to keep healthy. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and pupils appreciate the breadth of cultural diversity. Positive attitudes to learning contribute to pupils' progress. Teaching has many strengths, but is not consistently strong enough to increase progress to good overall. At times, activities do not meet the needs of different groups and there are too few opportunities for pupils to explore ideas for themselves. The curriculum is extended by a wide range of enrichment experiences that enliven learning, including well-attended extra-curricular activities. The care and well-being of pupils is at the heart of the school's work and this is much appreciated by parents and carers.

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing and mathematics by:

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- increasing opportunities for pupils to write independently at length in subjects other than English
- improving pupils' skills in solving real-life number problems.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently provide activities that challenge different groups of pupils
 - providing sufficient opportunities for pupils to explore ideas for themselves.
- Extend the skills of monitoring and evaluation to every subject leaders so that they can all play a key part in taking action to bring about improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, taking into account the broadly typical skills with which they enter school. Pupils are keen to learn and carry out their activities enthusiastically, working well together in pairs and small groups. They particularly enjoy finding out things for themselves. This was evident in a design and technology lesson for pupils in Years 5 and 6 in which they were investigating how different musical instruments are made, before making their own. Such opportunities are, however, limited. Pupils speak clearly and confidently, and are willing to share their ideas with others. They read fluently and with enjoyment. Their writing is generally correctly structured but pupils lack expertise in writing independently at length. Pupils have sound mathematical calculation skills but are not adept in using these to solve number problems. Overall progress is satisfactory and there is no significant difference between the achievement or learning of different groups.

Pupils willingly take on responsibilities, such as being a member of the school council, eco-council or a house captain. In so doing, they help to influence the school's development, as is seen in the eco-council's close involvement in the creation of an environmental area at the rear of the school. They contribute well to the wider community by fundraising for charities and taking part in local arts projects. Pupils have a good understanding of what makes a situation unsafe and they act responsibly in and around school. They say they feel safe and secure in school. Pupils know they need to eat a balanced diet and take regular exercise in order to stay healthy. Their improving attendance and the way in which they are making satisfactory progress in gaining basic skills means that pupils are soundly prepared their future lives.

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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	2
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	3
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?

Teachers have secure subject knowledge and are able to explain new ideas clearly. They manage classrooms effectively so that little time is lost. Pupils show interest in their work and are making progress that is broadly in line with their capabilities. Planning has been improved and usually ensures that pupils of different ability are given challenging work, but not always and this slows progress. At times, there is too much teacher direction and not enough emphasis on challenging pupils to explore ideas for themselves. Teachers make sound use of a variety of resources, including information and communication technology, to support learning. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support the learning of pupils, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The curriculum successfully promotes pupils' adoption of a healthy lifestyle, as reflected in the Activemark Award and Healthy School status. Pupils' skills are extended through a wide range of educational visits, including Towneley Hall Art Gallery and Museum and the recent Tutankhamen Exhibition in Manchester. Planning builds well on previous work but there are limited opportunities for pupils to find things out for themselves. The curriculum does not provide sufficient opportunities for sustained independent writing across subjects, in order for pupils to practise and refine their literacy skills. Partnerships with others, including local schools and the Burnley Schools Sports Partnership, effectively widen pupils' horizons and extend their skills, such as in music, French and sport.

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The school is a safe place in which to learn. Staff know the procedures to follow if they have concerns about the welfare of a pupil. The support for pupils who face challenging personal circumstances is an established part of the school's provision and plays an important role in promoting their learning and development. Well-developed links with outside agencies ensure extra support for individual pupils is readily available if required. Pupils who have medical needs are supported effectively to ensure their well-being. There is a trend of improvement in attendance because of leaders' efforts to involve parents and carers and impress on all the effect of absence on pupils' progress.

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?

Senior leaders work together well and understand what the school needs to do to improve. Increased delegation of leadership and management roles means more staff are involved in planning strategically for improvement. This delegation is not yet complete and not all subject leaders have enough expertise in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in their subjects. This limits their effectiveness in identifying areas for development in order to bring about improvement. Nevertheless, the school has raised its aspirations with higher targets which are starting to have an impact on pupils' progress. The governing body provides satisfactory management and discharges statutory responsibility diligently. Governors support staff and pupils well but are not yet fully involved in evaluating the school's performance.

The promotion of equality of opportunity is good, with no form of discrimination being tolerated. Procedures for tracking the progress of pupils have been improved so that gaps in progress are identified and addressed more effectively. The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are comprehensive and reviewed on a regular basis. All staff are given good quality training, especially in child protection.

The school works effectively in partnership with others, including nearby schools and the Burnley Schools Sports Partnership. As a result, pupils' learning and development are enhanced, for example in sport and in the arts, in ways that the school could not provide on its own. Leaders promote cohesion well in school and the local community and this leads to harmonious relationships. There is good engagement with a range of community groups beyond the school and its immediate locality. The school has positive relationships with parents and carers and keeps them regularly informed of the progress and achievement of their children.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
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	3

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers returning completed questionnaires was below average. The overwhelming majority were positive about the school's work and the efforts of all staff. One comment was typical, 'The teaching staff show real enthusiasm. The discipline is of a high standard.' There was no significant trend of negative views. Inspection judgements support the positive views of parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Burnley Lowerhouse Junior 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 30 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 146 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	16	53	14	47	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	21	70	9	30	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	16	53	14	47	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	43	16	53	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	17	57	13	43	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	47	15	50	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	47	15	50	1	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)	13	43	15	50	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	53	13	43	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	57	12	40	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	43	16	53	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	16	53	14	47	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	18	60	12	40	0	0	0	0

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



6 April 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Burnley Lowerhouse Junior School, Burnley, BB12 6LN

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us when we inspected your school. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing the many interesting things you do.

The inspectors judge that your school is satisfactory and that:

- by the end of Year 6 you attain average standards in English and mathematics
- you know the importance of living a healthy lifestyle
- staff make sure you are safe in school and on visits
- you behave well and have positive attitudes to learning
- the curriculum is helpfully extended by visits to places such as to the Tutankhamen Exhibition in Manchester
- you enjoy school and adults care about you, as indicated in your questionnaires
- the headteacher, staff and the governing body are working hard to help you do better.

This is what we have asked your school to do now:

- raise attainment in writing and mathematics, by improving your ability to write at length in subjects other than English and to solve real-life number problems
- make sure you are always given work that makes you think hard and provide more opportunities for you to explore ideas for yourselves
- develop the skills of some teachers who lead subjects in evaluating your learning.

All of you are a credit to your school and can help it improve further by continuing to try your best in your activities.

Yours sincerely

Melvyn Hemmings

Lead inspector

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