

Burnley Lowerhouse Junior School

Liverpool Road, Burnley, Lancashire, BB12 6LN

Inspection dates

4–5 June 2014

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Inadequate | 4 |
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Consistently good teaching ensures that all groups of pupils make good progress. Attainment in English and mathematics is improving securely.
- Leaders and governors have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Decisive action has been taken to tackle weaknesses and develop teachers' skills. Leaders demonstrate strong capacity to sustain school improvement by building on good practice.
- All aspects of the school's work are systematically and thoroughly checked and evaluated giving leaders a secure basis for planning further improvements.
- Pupils are keen and attentive learners who relish the opportunities school provides. Their attendance is above average and rising.
- Pastoral care is highly effective in supporting pupils and their families to make the most of school.
- Teamwork among staff is a notable strength, underpinning their high morale and absolute commitment to ensuring that pupils enjoy school and achieve well.
- A vibrant curriculum has captured pupils' interest and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to improve their extended writing, in response to teachers' feedback. Although they produce a substantial amount of writing, pupils do not always think in enough depth about how to use language differently for particular purposes and audiences.
- Pupils do not always recognise how the skills they develop in mathematics might be applied in different contexts.
- Some middle leaders have not had opportunity to monitor and evaluate developments in their subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 10 lessons, of which four were joint observations with the school’s leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and observed pupils working in small groups. They scrutinised work in pupils’ books and displayed on walls around the school. They visited an assembly and a whole school singing practice.
- Inspectors talked to pupils in lessons about their work, listened to pupils reading and held a longer discussion with a group of pupils representing each class.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, staff, parents, two governors including the Chair of the Governing Body and two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 42 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and considered the school’s records of parental feedback.
- Fifteen completed staff questionnaires were analysed.
- A range of documents was scrutinised by inspectors, including records of leaders’ monitoring of teachers’ work, information relating to the progress being made by pupils currently in school, the school improvement plan and self-evaluation report, minutes of governing body meetings, pupil attitude survey outcomes and records relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Shirley Gornall, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Gordon Alston

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized junior school.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- Nearly one third of pupils are supported by pupil premium; this figure is higher than average. Pupil premium is additional funding provided for children who are looked after by the local authority and those who are eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs supported at school action is average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs supported at school action or through statements of special educational needs is below average.
- Fewer pupils leave or join the school at times other than the normal transition points than is the case nationally.
- The headteacher has been in post since May 2013 and the deputy headteacher joined the school in summer 2014.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- When it was inspected in January 2013, the school was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give pupils an acceptable quality of education. Three monitoring inspections have taken place since then to gauge the school's rate of improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide opportunities for pupils to improve their writing skills further in response to feedback given by their teachers and peers in order to produce more sustained writing of high quality for different audiences and purposes.
- Ensure that teachers are able to challenge pupils about how their mathematical thinking might be applied in different contexts.
- Develop the contribution to school improvement of subject leaders by providing further opportunities for them to monitor and evaluate teachers' and pupils' work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics has improved rapidly since the school's previous inspection. In 2013, results obtained by pupils in the end of Key Stage 2 tests showed that they made strong progress in reading and writing from their different starting points. Achievement in mathematics was rising but at a slower pace. The school's information about the progress of pupils currently in school is robust, and has been regularly checked by external moderators. It shows that the proportions of pupils making and exceeding expected progress from their relative starting points are consistently above national figures across subjects. Concerted action has secured strong improvement in reading, writing and mathematics for pupils of all ages and groups.
- In 2013 the attainment of pupils supported by pupil premium was around one term behind that of their peers. Actions taken by the school have narrowed gaps in performance between groups and raised the attainment of all pupils. Pupils eligible for pupil premium are now making progress at a faster rate than similar pupils nationally, and at a faster rate than their peers in school.
- Pupils are enthusiastic readers who talk with interest about their favourite authors. They have good reading stamina and can find efficient ways for understanding the meaning of new words. As one pupil said, 'it's not always good to use a dictionary if it's really a synonym you want to find.' Frequent opportunities to read a variety of books for sustained periods have developed pupils' confidence and fluency.
- Pupils' spelling skills are improving and they are confident in using more complex vocabulary within different contexts. A sustained focus on punctuation and grammar has developed pupils' technical accuracy. Year 6 pupils had a confident debate about the reason for placing a semi-colon in a sentence. A few pupils from different classes forget to check whether 'was' and 'were' are used correctly when they write in the past tense.
- Pupils write for different purposes and audiences. Their accounts of life on *Titanic* illustrate vividly that they have imagination and empathy. They write regularly and received detailed feedback from their teachers, however there are relatively few opportunities for them to edit and improve their extended writing and this means that they do not always produce the very best sustained writing of which they are capable.
- Achievement in mathematics has improved. Pupils enjoy talking about numbers and completing mathematical challenges. Teachers have worked hard to find practical contexts for mathematical work. On some occasions, teachers do not consolidate pupils' mathematical thinking by setting tasks related to 'real life' matters of interest to them.
- The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good in response to high quality class teaching and effective support. The teacher with responsibility for co-ordinating the school's work to meet pupils' special educational needs has an accurate understanding of individual pupils' skills.
- Higher-attaining pupils are making accelerated progress in response to a greater level of challenge. This is particularly evident in mathematics where teachers have developed more open-ended activities to promote deeper thinking, which are enjoyed by pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- 'The lessons are always fun and our teachers are kind' was a statement made by one pupil and echoed by many others. Mutually respectful relationships between staff and pupils are a major strength of the school.
- Leaders and teachers focus on getting 'pitch and expectation' right for every group of pupils in every class. There is continual, fruitful dialogue in school about learning and progress. Teachers and support staff work collaboratively, sharing ideas and specialist subject knowledge.

- Teaching is well-paced and engaging. Teachers plan thoroughly, taking account of pupils' interests as well as their attainment levels. They listen to pupils' feedback about the types of work they enjoy and take this into account in planning stimulating activities.
- Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to the learning of different groups of pupils. Their skilful leadership of group reading sessions, alongside class teachers, means that all pupils have regular opportunities to read aloud, answer probing questions verbally and explain their thinking.
- The quality of display in corridors and classrooms is of such good quality that it is now being used by the local authority to inspire other schools. Three-dimensional models produced by pupils complement extended writing and art work, enticing other pupils to read and learn about life in Britain in the 1950s, electricity, multi-layered structures in the human body and underwater life forms. Displays are regularly refreshed; pupils say that they 'make us want to find out more.' Other displays exemplify thinking processes in mathematics or writing and provide pupils with helpful advice.
- Teachers have worked hard to make their marking effective. Books are marked regularly and well. Pupils are given advice on how to improve their work and there are some clear examples of where they have responded to questions teachers have posed in their marking. The marking of pupils' extended writing is not always as productive as it might be because of insufficient opportunities for pupils to revisit and improve their work in depth.
- Effective training and coaching have supported teachers in developing high quality questioning skills, assessing pupils' progress and providing work that is appropriately pitched for different groups. Teaching is now consistently good and improving.

The behaviour and safety of pupils is good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite and friendly: this was the view given to inspectors by parents, teachers and catering staff. Pupils agree that they behave well and 'look out for each other.'
- During lessons, pupils concentrate well and co-operate with each other readily when they are required to undertake group activities. In a mathematics lesson when they were deciding on how to sort data, Year 3 pupils listened carefully to each other's viewpoints. Pupils' good behaviour makes a significant contribution to their learning.
- Pupils are motivated by the school's rewards system and try hard to reach 'gold' status. There is healthy competition between classes, underpinned by a sense that everyone tries to be their best every day, and that every day is a new opportunity to shine.
- Pupils' attendance is above average and, in the academic year 2013-2014, no pupil has been persistently absent from school. This is a reflection on pupils' enthusiasm for school and on the effective, trusting relationships built with families by the school's leaders and family support worker that mean problems that may impact on attendance can be discussed and resolved.
- According to pupils, there is occasional falling-out of friends at the school but 'no real bullying – they wouldn't stand for it here.' Pupils understand different forms of bullying and know that it can have hurtful long-term consequences. They are sensitive to each other's differences. The school has built a strong relationship with a partner school that provides opportunities for pupils to make friends from different ethnic heritages.
- Pupils' positive attitudes to learning are shown by their great enthusiasm to complete voluntary 'personal learning challenges' during their own time, often with the support of family members.
- The products of these activities are proudly presented and celebrated. Pupils believe that homework helps them to learn and most complete it conscientiously. The school's homework clubs provide support where it is needed. Most pupils present their work neatly and are proud when they receive a pen licence to acknowledge that their handwriting is of a good standard.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is of good quality. Safeguarding children is regarded as everyone's responsibility. Employment checks are thoroughly completed and staff are carefully trained. The school environment is clean, tidy and secure.

The leadership and management are good

- In her first year in post, the headteacher has inspired and energised staff, secured their commitment to improvement and developed the school as an outward-facing hub in the community. The recently- appointed deputy headteacher has had immediate impact and has boosted leadership capacity to improve the school still further.
- All new developments are fully researched, considered, piloted, implemented and evaluated. This painstaking approach means that all staff are fully aware of what the school is trying to achieve, and their part in developments.
- Senior leaders monitor and evaluate teachers' work thoroughly through a supportive process that invites teachers' detailed reflections. Teachers regard themselves as part of a learning community and value the professional development they receive. Good practice is shared generously within school as well as through relationships with other local schools.
- Pupils' progress is monitored assiduously so that any small plateau or dip in a pupil's achievement is identified and steps taken to rectify it. Teachers hold regular discussions with every pupil on an individual basis to ascertain their views about their learning and consider how their progress can be boosted further.
- Subject leaders for literacy and numeracy have worked hard with staff to raise achievement through a forensic analysis of pupils' skills, understanding and misconceptions. They have developed confidence in supporting and challenging their colleagues. The co-ordinator for special educational needs has improved the school's processes for identifying pupils' needs and ensuring that they are appropriately met. Other subject leaders have had fewer opportunities to influence, monitor and evaluate teachers' and pupils' work in their subjects.
- The school's self-evaluation is rigorous, accurate and honest. Leaders base their judgements of the school on wide-ranging data, taking full account of the views of pupils, parents and staff. Improvement planning is grounded in the outcomes of evaluation so that leaders' focus is consistently on the things that matter.
- Pupil premium funding is spent prudently and has resulted in improved attendance and accelerated progress for eligible pupils. Breakfast followed by 'early bird' activities give many pupils a boost at the start of the day.
- Additional sports funding has given teachers good opportunities to develop their skills through working alongside sports coaches. Pupils enjoy a range of sports and their extensive participation in extra-curricular activities indicates that many are being inspired to lead healthy lifestyles.
- The school's curriculum is imaginative and engaging. Half-termly visits or visitors for all classes are welcomed by pupils and give them memorable experiences that support their learning in different subjects. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their study of 'Amazing Africa' which had stimulated their interest in different cultural beliefs.
- Transition from the local infant school has been improved through close working between senior leaders of both schools to enable pupils' learning to progress smoothly. The introduction of role play areas at Lowerhouse is a thoughtful response to the needs of some pupils.
- Leaders provide well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. All adults in school model caring and considerate behaviour and expect the same of pupils. Opportunities to share thoughts and feelings are frequent, enhanced by the school's 'nurture' provision. Pupils reflected on their ideas about Pentecost during a thought-provoking assembly and continued to explore these as the day progressed. Their expressive singing showed that they empathised with the plight of *Romeo and Juliet* and recognised parallels in modern life.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and improvement priorities. They receive regular, detailed information from the headteacher which they interrogate thoroughly. Governors' understanding of pupil performance data is strong and they consider this, along with the school's records of lesson observations and work scrutiny,

in coming to a view about the quality of teaching, linked to pupils' achievement. The standards and effectiveness committee of the governing body is a significant driver in the school's improvement. Governors have benefited from training and advice provided by the local authority and they now hold the school's leaders to account robustly. The governing body has been strengthened by the appointment of a new member with educational expertise.

- Governors fulfil their statutory duties seriously and effectively, including with regard to safeguarding pupils.
- Governors' links with parents and the local community are strong, as shown by the recent creation of a parent teacher association.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 119215 |
| Local authority | Lancashire |
| Inspection number | 441689 |

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

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| Type of school | Junior |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 7–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 173 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | David Johnson |
| Headteacher | Claire Holgate |
| Date of previous school inspection | 31 January 2013 |
| Telephone number | 01282 426774 |
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