

Briercliffe Primary School

Delamere Road, Briercliffe, Burnley, Lancashire BB10 2JU

Inspection dates	10–11 May 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The effective leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by his deputy, has brought about a culture change in the school which has helped drive improvements.
- Teaching has improved and standards are rising, especially in reading and writing and to a lesser extent in mathematics.
- Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is monitored effectively. Quick and timely interventions are supporting rising standards throughout the school.
- The school has rebuilt positive relationships with parents who are fully appreciative of the support their children receive.
- Governors are effective in offering challenge and support in equal measure.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations of all pupils.
- All adults are very clearly focused on the welfare of pupils. Those pupils who are vulnerable or at risk and those who have special educational needs or disability are particularly well looked after.
- Attendance and punctuality are good.
- Behaviour is good and pupils conduct themselves well around the school. In many lessons there is a very productive atmosphere.
- Good teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) has resulted in year-on-year improvement. This is strongly linked to the good development of reading skills.
- Children in the early years provision make good progress and quickly grow in confidence. Good teaching ensures secure language and numeracy skills and prepares them well for more formal learning. Leadership in the early years is good.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The role of middle leaders, in subjects other than English and mathematics, is at an early stage of development
- While progress in mathematics is being made, standards are generally lower than in reading and writing.
- Pupils can be over-reliant on adults rather than taking responsibility to correct their own work.
- There are weaknesses in the broader curriculum and the teaching of creative subjects, as well as science, history and geography. Currently, teachers lack the subject knowledge to teach these subjects with confidence.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that improvements in achievement in mathematics are on a par with those in reading and writing.
- Develop pupils' resilience and confidence in their own ability to enable them to take greater responsibility in correcting and improving their work without being too dependent on adults.
- Develop the role of middle leaders across the full range of subjects to ensure that they:
 - are accountable for improvements in the areas that they lead and that the curriculum is broad and balanced
 - develop the expertise of teachers through the acquisition of appropriate resources and training to enable them to teach the full range of subjects with increasing confidence and with improved outcomes for pupils
 - monitor provision and use this information to plan for future improvements in their subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has been resolute in his determination to improve provision for pupils and change the culture of the school. This is acknowledged by governors, parents and pupils alike. As one parent stated: 'The school has changed dramatically and has been transformed. The headteacher is very supportive and has sorted out many of the problems which had persisted for a number of years.'
- The headteacher knows the school and its strengths and weaknesses well. The development plan is regularly updated. The enormity of the task facing him meant he had to prioritise and target resources on English and mathematics. He has helped improve the delivery of these subjects through focused training which has developed teacher confidence and competence.
- Staff support this new vision for the school as well as the changes and improvements initiated over the last two years. As one teacher identified 'Now we are a strong team. It has been extremely hard and challenging but we feel refreshed'. Where previously the school had been insular it is now outward looking and teachers are keen to learn and adopt new ideas which will improve provision in the classroom.
- There has been a strong focus on improving the teaching of English and mathematics and the school has drawn on the expertise of specialist support from the local authority to support improvements. School leaders recognise that momentum needs to be maintained to ensure that pupils begin to make the same progress in mathematics as in reading and writing.
- Pupil tracking procedures have been revised and teachers have more ownership and are more familiar with the data. Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is now monitored more effectively than previously, allowing for quick and timely interventions which are supporting rising standards throughout the school. Staff have a better understanding and ownership of data on a day-to-day basis and use it more effectively to support their planning.
- Staff are now held accountable. Monitoring and evaluation procedures have been strengthened with support, advice and training from the local authority monitoring and intervention team. These are now strongly linked to ongoing professional development and teachers' pay progression. Strengths and weaknesses are now clearly identified and the headteacher is fully aware of classes where teaching still requires further improvement.
- The role of middle leaders, in subjects other than English and mathematics, is at an early stage of development. The headteacher is fully aware of weaknesses in the broader curriculum and work in books shows that currently there is insufficient coverage of science and the foundation subjects. There are weaknesses in creative subjects and limited opportunities for pupils to visit places of interest or participate in cultural events. School leaders are aware of these weaknesses and plans are in place to tackle any deficiencies.
- Pupil premium funding is being used effectively. It is impacting on standards by ensuring that disadvantaged pupils are able to achieve as well as others in the school and enabling them to participate fully in all aspects of school life.
- Sports premium funding is well-targeted and makes good use of outside coaches from the Burnley School Sports Partnership to increase the skills of the staff and improve their expertise in teaching sport and physical education. There is greater participation in lunchtime and after-school sport, especially for older pupils in key stage 2. Participation rates for these pupils in sport activities have risen from 20% to 69% over the last two years. Over half the pupils are now involved in inter-school competition across a range of sports and activities.
- The school supports the moral and social development of its pupils very well. Treating each other with respect and care is central to the philosophy of the school. Links with the Burnley Faith Centre are providing more frequent opportunities for pupils to learn about other religions and cultures. Every week, awards are given to those pupils who are deemed worthy of being 'star citizens'. Pupils have the opportunity to have their voices heard through the school council. These and other activities provide a sound basis for promoting British values.
- Positive relationships with parents have been rebuilt. School leaders are visible at the start and end of the day and 'meet and greet' parents who are made welcome through the 'open door' policy. The vast majority of parents would recommend the school to others. As one parent summed up, 'The school has totally changed over the last two years. The staff are very approachable and provide good support for the children.'

■ The governance of the school

- Governors are kept well informed, know the school well and they now offer challenge and support in equal measure. As one governor identified, 'We now have a mission and purpose'.
 - Since the last inspection, governors have undergone an external review of their effectiveness and have made changes to their organisation and the way they operate. New governors have been recruited with an educational background and there is now a better balance of skills and experience.
 - Governors are now aware of their responsibilities and take part in appropriate training. They are regular visitors to the school and are recognised by staff and pupils. They have link meetings once a term with school and subject leaders to receive regular updates, hold discussions and get to know the work of the school through learning walks and reviews of pupils' work.
 - The schools' performance data for all year groups is now shared on a termly basis in a transparent and accessible way. Governor 'question time' has been added to each governing body agenda and staff and school leaders now regularly provide reports for these sessions and are questioned about impact.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The outside environment is secure and well appointed. Fencing and good supervision of visitors ensures that the site is kept safe and secure. All statutory safeguarding requirements are met. Leaders ensure that pupils attending the breakfast and after-school clubs are kept safe and are well-cared-for.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching has improved over time particularly in the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics, and is currently good. The teaching of other subjects is less secure.
- Well focused and appropriate professional development has strengthened staff confidence in the teaching of reading and writing and to a slightly lesser extent, mathematics. These subjects are generally taught well. Teachers are confident and understand what needs to be done. In the early years and key stage 1, they prioritise the development of social and linguistic skills which enable pupils to better access their learning as they move through the school.
- In English and mathematics lessons, staff use good questioning and prompting which enables pupils to work equally collaboratively or independently. They are able to show their understanding and explain their thinking, for example when employing different methods to solve problems in mathematics.
- Teachers frequently use a range of approaches in their teaching of English and mathematics to cater for pupils of differing abilities. These approaches generally suit lower- and middle-ability pupils best. In other subjects, pupils of all abilities are frequently asked to complete similar tasks.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations of all pupils. More effective support is provided by teaching assistants in English and mathematics where there is greater awareness of what needs to be done than in other subjects.
- Staff have worked hard to gain a good understanding of assessment and of tracking pupils' progress in order to arrange intervention work and enable them to challenge pupils more effectively.
- Homework is used well to consolidate learning. Parents were very positive about the improvements made to the quality and frequency of the homework.
- Good-quality teaching of phonics (linking letters and sounds) allows pupils to practise, apply and use sounds in context and ensures that pupils are engaged and making progress.
- Guided reading sessions are usually very productive. Inspectors observed pupils reading and interpreting text to find interesting information. In the focus groups, good questioning enabled pupils to read, make corrections and find information.
- Marking is supporting pupils to be able to improve their work and address any misconceptions.
- There are, however, some inconsistencies in teaching across classes with weaker teaching in science and foundation subjects such as history, geography and modern foreign languages and so on. Currently, teachers lack the subject knowledge, confidence or appropriate resources to teach these subjects as effectively as they teach English and mathematics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare is a cornerstone of the work of the school. School leaders and governors are making every effort to ensure that the school provides a safe environment in which all the pupils in their care can flourish and succeed.
- All the parents inspectors talked to had nothing but praise for the school and the work of the staff. Several stated that 'all children are well looked after, happy and making progress'. The mentor provides effective support to vulnerable pupils to enable them to access their learning by developing their confidence and self-esteem.
- Staff are very clearly focused on the welfare of pupils. They regularly share information in meetings and liaise with the mentor if they have concerns about any pupil.
- Those pupils who are vulnerable, at risk, or have special educational needs or disability are particularly well looked after. There is a strong focus on early identification of need or concern and the school works well with a range of outside agencies to improve outcomes for these pupils. Any dilatory response from outside agencies is quickly chased up.
- Pupils feel safe in school and they are aware of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including on the internet.
- Pupils are aware of the different types of bullying, including homophobic and racist bullying, and understand why such behaviour is unacceptable. Those spoken to are adamant that incidents of bullying had declined and that any issues would be addressed very quickly. As one Year 6 pupil stated: 'There is no bullying – we are all good friends'. Another showed maturity by stating 'there is nothing wrong with being different'.
- Attendance and punctuality are good. Attendance has improved and is better than the national average. Persistent absenteeism has declined overall. There are clear procedures in place to pursue those pupils who are absent or not punctual. The attendance of persistent absentees is closely monitored.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school. They are polite, stand aside to let adults pass and are inquisitive. Inspectors were frequently approached and questioned.
- Pupils are encouraged, from an early age, to develop positive routines in the classroom. For example in the Reception class, children showed they could be responsible and trusted by tidying away and gathering sensibly on the carpet in eager anticipation of their morning challenge session.
- In many lessons, there was a good productive atmosphere with pupils supporting each other well. Pupils were adamant that lessons were not disturbed by poor behaviour.
- Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and expect them to act with increasing maturity. This was evidenced during a morning break where two Year 5 boys had obviously had a falling out. The teacher had spoken to them and sent them to the edge of the playground to discuss their problem. They returned shortly after with the conflict having been resolved. They were observed later, happily playing together with the incident forgotten as if they were the best of friends.
- At times, pupils can still be overdependent on adults to correct their work – a legacy of a reliance culture which had previously permeated the school. Inspectors observed pupils not correcting their own writing even though they were able to point out possible grammatical errors. There was little evidence that pupils regularly used dictionaries to check and correct their spellings.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Outcomes for pupils have improved since the last inspection and they are now much better prepared for secondary school. Leaders have tackled a legacy of underachievement, and attainment is improving across the school and in most classes in English and to a lesser extent, in mathematics. Progress in other subjects is less evident. The school has placed a strong focus on ensuring that pupils develop the key skills in reading, writing and mathematics as a necessity.

- The changing demographics of the area mean that increasing numbers of children begin school with levels of communication, literacy and language skills and understanding of number below those typical for their age. The proportion of children who go on to achieve a good level of development has been steadily rising and is above the national average because of the good teaching and support these children receive. Current school data predicts further improvement this year.
- A systematic approach to teaching phonics has resulted in year-on-year improvement, with current standards well above the national average. This includes pupils who have special educational needs or disability as well as disadvantaged pupils. The teaching of phonics is effective and strongly linked to the good development of reading skills. The majority of pupils are fluent readers with books and texts well matched to their ability.
- Outcomes at key stage 1 are at or above the national average, reflecting an improving trend in recent years. Writing has improved most noticeably. Progress in mathematics is not as pronounced as in reading and writing. Girls tend to outperform the boys, although the gap is narrower than the gap found nationally in writing, but not in reading and mathematics.
- At key stage 2, there has been a substantial improvement in standards from previous years, notably in writing. Standards now are at or above the national average in all areas. Nearly all pupils are making at least expected progress and the number making more than expected progress has increased and is above the national average, except in mathematics. This represents a sustained upward trend over the last two years. Current school data suggests a slight reversal this year reflecting the larger numbers of pupils with learning difficulties in the current Year 6 cohort.
- The small number of disadvantaged pupils in some classes makes year-on-year comparisons difficult. Overall, the gap in writing compared to the gap found nationally closed, but widened in mathematics and reading. Improved use of intervention is tackling these anomalies. The use of interventions is much more focused and staff are supporting pupils well in closing gaps in learning. Individual programmes are well constructed to support as well as monitor pupils' progress.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability generally make at least the same progress as their peers. As one parent identified: 'My child has special needs and has really made good progress, especially in reading.'
- The positive pattern of progress is not yet consistent across all classes and, in a very small number of classes, some pupils are not making the progress they should. School leaders are aware of this and are providing bespoke support for teachers and additional intervention for pupils to improve the quality of provision in these classes.
- These inconsistencies mean that the most-able pupils do not always make as much progress as they should. This is because they are sometimes provided with work they can already do. However, this pattern varies from class to class and subject to subject reflecting a legacy of previously inconsistent practice. For example, last year the most-able pupils outperformed other pupils nationally in mathematics. This was at variance with the overall school trend and reflected their ability to make more rapid progress to compensate for weaker teaching lower down the school in previous years.

Early years provision

is good

- Leadership of the early years is good. Leaders have addressed the lack of opportunities for children to extend their reading, writing and mathematical skills identified during the previous inspection. They ensure that children are developing their skills in all areas and the greater majority now reach a good level of development before they start more formal learning.
- Quality teamwork and good teaching, supported by an effective programme of ongoing professional development, is ensuring that children make good and sometimes rapid progress from their starting points.
- Provision in the early years has been restructured. Teaching activities are now integrated, whereas previously there had been two separate classes, and there is a greater focus on exploration and investigation. The outdoor area is very well resourced and enables children to be free to explore their interests.
- Staff demonstrate good knowledge of current early years practice. This enables children to develop their skills, confidence and self-esteem. Good questioning encourages and prompts children to extend their ideas. Clear routines are in place. For example, sustained time is made available for children to develop reading and writing skills. Children are provided with frequent, good opportunities to socialise during which they can develop their speaking and listening.

- Children are encouraged to develop an early interest in books and reading. Inspectors observed children accessing books in the reading corner and discussing pictures and stories together.
- Children are absorbed in their learning and are developing curiosity and independence by involving themselves in well-prepared activities and accessing good resources. They have good opportunities to explore, investigate and follow their own interests.
- Children's safety and welfare are ensured because leaders and staff have received good training, including safeguarding and first-aid. First aid equipment at strategic points enables fast treatment of minor injuries. Good hygiene practice is observed with children washing their hands before accessing their snacks.
- Staff have developed strong relationships with parents. For example, 'talk homework' has proved very popular and provides opportunities for parents to become involved in their child's learning and consolidate this at home.
- Early identification of need and good links with a range of agencies provide additional support for vulnerable children in the early years. For example, a nearby Sure Start centre is being used to provide additional family support to disadvantaged children, including those who have special educational needs or disability.
- Equally good links have been established with the 17 nurseries which feed into the school. This ensures that valuable information to aid transition is transferred promptly to the school.

School details

Unique reference number	119168
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10012189

This inspection 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	307
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Foley
Headteacher	Robert Blanchet
Telephone number	01282 459421
Website	www.briercliffe.lancs.sch.uk
Email address	head@briercliffe.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 May 2014

Information about this school

- The school is slightly larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The early years provision is in two Reception classes where children attend full time.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is below the national average. The pupil premium is funding for pupils who are, or have been, eligible for free school meals, or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below the national average.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all year groups in the school apart from Year 6 who were involved in end-of-key-stage tests. They looked at phonics teaching, listened to pupils read and observed pupils at break, lunchtime and around the school. There were no joint observations with school leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised and evaluated pupils' work across a range of subjects, especially English, mathematics, and topic work, which included science, history and geography.
- A wide range of documentation was looked at, including: school policies, assessments and records of pupils' progress, local authority reports, monitoring files on the quality of teaching, self-evaluation and procedures to safeguard pupils. Documentation from the school website was also considered.
- Inspectors met with school leaders, staff and, on two occasions, with a total of five governors. Discussions were also held with representatives from the local authority.
- Meetings were held with three different groups of pupils to discuss their work, how safe they felt and what they thought about the school. Inspectors also talked to many other pupils during lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors considered the 27 responses from the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also talked briefly to a small number of parents who were collecting their children from school at the beginning and end of the school day. They also took into account the local authority's parental survey, two responses from staff and six responses from pupils who completed the inspection questionnaire.

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