

# Lowerplace Primary School

Kingsway, Rochdale, Lancashire OL16 4UU

## Inspection dates

15–16 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time varies too much across classes and subjects. Some activities are unimaginative and pupils do not excel in their learning.
- Weak teaching and assessment in the past mean that current pupils have gaps in their skills and knowledge. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils is patchy across the school.
- Reviews of the impact of support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not always detailed enough. Some pupils struggle in their learning because their needs are not met well.
- On occasion, activities for children in the Reception classes lack challenge. Assessments of children, while improving, are not always comprehensive enough to help staff in their teaching. Some leaders do not have a clear understanding of the issues affecting teaching and learning in the early years or how they will achieve improvement.
- The school's website does not meet requirements.

### The school has the following strengths

- The new senior leadership team is improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment quickly. Staff fully support and understand the widespread changes.
- Lowerplace is an inclusive school where pupils respect different people and communities. They have the positive attitudes and values necessary to be good citizens.
- Classrooms are attractive and celebrate learning very thoughtfully. Pupils enjoy coming to school.
- The school has a strong culture of protecting and caring for its pupils. Pupils feel safe and their behaviour is consistently positive.
- The school governing body is acting with absolute dedication to support the school through a period of immense change.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of education in key stages 1 and 2 by:
  - strengthening the quality of teaching and assessment so that it is at least good across all classes
  - tackling the gaps in the skills and knowledge of pupils so they make up for lost time quickly
  - developing more learning that inspires pupils' investigation, enjoyment and fascination
  - improving the coordination of support, and the quality of assessment of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities so they achieve well from their starting points
  - setting suitably challenging activities for the most able pupils so they achieve as much as they can
  - making sure that disadvantaged pupils make swifter progress and do as well as other children nationally.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in the Reception classes by:
  - raising expectations of what children are expected to do in activities so their learning is always worthwhile and meaningful
  - strengthening arrangements for assessing children's learning, so staff base their judgements of children's needs and progress on a wide range of information, as required by school policy
  - making sure that all leaders in the early years have a clear and well-informed understanding of which aspects of teaching and learning should be improved and how this will be achieved.
- Make sure that the school website meets requirements.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Upheaval in the staffing of the school in 2016 had a negative impact on the quality of leadership, teaching, learning and pupils' achievement. The school's new leadership team, working tirelessly, have brought stability and a clear direction to the work of the school. The standard of teaching, learning and assessment are now improving rapidly.
- Leaders and governors make full use of advice and support available through a network of local schools and from the local authority. Leaders' reviews of the school are thorough, precise and realistic and focus well on the necessary steps for improvement. Leaders, governors and staff understand what needs to change in the quality of education for pupils.
- Leaders consult and support staff well in reshaping the school's priorities and in establishing a new school culture of teamwork, professionalism and mutual challenge. Leaders audit how well staff confidence and skills are growing and use this information well to refine the support given. Staff are clear about how they can improve learning, and about the standard of teaching that leaders are working to achieve. Morale among staff is high.
- Middle leaders are developing effective skills by attending external leadership training; their expertise adds to the enhanced ability of the school to raise standards.
- Newly qualified teachers are supported well. They make a valued contribution to the improvement of teaching in the school because they are bringing fresh ideas and insight to the work of their colleagues.
- Relationships between different pupils in the school are harmonious. The school includes pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities fully in classroom life.
- Pupils learn from many opportunities that develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Their rich and varied learning prepares them well for life in modern Britain. For example, they have a clear understanding of the democratic right of people to disagree with governments, through peaceful means.
- Leaders make sure that learning and achievement are visibly and positively celebrated in classrooms and corridors throughout the school.
- Pupils' skills benefit greatly from many sporting opportunities at the school. The extensive range of provision reflects the careful expenditure of physical education (PE) and sport funding, as well as the skilful leadership the PE subject leader gives staff.
- Teachers respond positively to challenge from leaders about how to improve their work. Leaders match staff training and targets carefully to individual staff needs and to school priorities. Previously weak teaching and assessment has improved noticeably since September 2016.
- Because of the skilful leadership of the interim headteacher and deputy headteacher, the school curriculum continues to strengthen. Pupils say that extra activities about reading, dancing, homework and the enjoyment of animation, for example, help them to learn better. Teachers are now working to improve the way they plan and

implement some activities, so as to excite pupils even more in lessons.

- School leaders now act quickly to plan and review the use of pupil premium funding. More disadvantaged pupils are progressing well in their learning, and better than has previously been the case. Leaders are not complacent, they recognise they need to do even more to accelerate progress for disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders spend additional funding for special educational needs and/or disabilities adequately, particularly to provide additional help for individual pupils. While aspects of coordinating this work are improving, some leaders do not have a full understanding of the impact of the school's work.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors are very well informed about teaching, learning and pupils' achievement, and the issues that the school experienced during 2016. As a result, the governing body significantly stepped up the quality of its work to support the school during a period of huge change and upheaval.
- Governors actively attend extra training, and listen to advice from the local authority.
- Governors consider information from external reviews of the school in order to check what the interim headteacher is telling them about improvement. They meet frequently with new school leaders to review progress and confidently ask challenging questions.
- Governors pursue their well-considered plans to sustain the leadership and development of the school for the long term. They recognise the importance of their actions and decisions in re-establishing high-quality education at Lowerplace.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The interim headteacher has taken many steps to strengthen the previously adequate care and protection of pupils. The school has a strong culture of safeguarding, involving listening to pupils, building good communication between staff and establishing good parental and community links.
- Staff are up to date and well informed about safeguarding issues and national guidance. Expertise in safeguarding is shared between several key staff. Recording of any concerns is made with the utmost care and leaders review information well.
- Leaders and staff take many steps to educate pupils and families about e-safety. Displays around the school show very clearly the range of staff whom pupils can approach with any safeguarding concerns.
- The interim headteacher is fully trained as designated safeguarding leader. He gives skilled, regular supervision to the operational safeguarding leader to check and review her caseload of family support issues. As a result, expertise and information is shared fully between leaders. Referrals to the local authority regarding the safety and well-being of pupils or families are made promptly and appropriately.
- The school's published child protection policy is not up to date. However, the many well-established arrangements to protect and care for pupils show that this issue does not indicate wider weaknesses.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning over time is too variable. In some classes, pupils are behind where they need to be in their skills and knowledge. Through training and the recent help and support leaders give, staff skills are improving. However, the quality of teaching across the school is not consistently strong enough to provide every pupil with the learning they need.
- The quality of staff's teaching of small groups of pupils is inconsistent. Some support is helping pupils to make good progress, whereas at other times teaching is weaker. For example, this is occurring when staff overuse commercial materials to guide their teaching and do not amend activities in the light of pupils' slow or rapid progress.
- In 2016, serious shortcomings emerged in the quality of assessment in the school. The main issues have been addressed quickly by the interim headteacher and deputy headteacher. Staff's assessments of pupils are now accurate and reliable. Staff check pupils' learning more confidently and thoroughly. Staff use information about gaps in pupils' learning to shape the planned next steps for each class. Nevertheless, leaders recognise that more work is required to make sure that all staff respond quickly to pupils' learning during activities.
- The staff now recognise that when pupils are behind in their learning this can mean that pupils are underachieving, and not that they have special educational needs/and or disabilities. Consequently, the number of pupils known as having special educational needs and/or disabilities has reduced and is much more accurate. Nevertheless, it is too soon to see the full impact of the school's revised arrangements to pinpoint the needs of these pupils through better assessment. Hence, some pupils struggle in their learning.
- Teachers' questioning of pupils is improving and in some classes it is a strength. However, some staff give too little attention to deepening and extending the abilities of the most able pupils.
- Staff make increasingly good use of time in each school day to find additional opportunities to teach pupils. Thus, for example, Year 6 pupils are benefiting well from 'booster classes' before other lessons begin.
- Teaching assistants play a valuable role in teaching pupils. Teachers increasingly recognise and develop colleagues' skills to support the needs of different groups of pupils in classes. This means that teaching assistants and teachers are increasingly sharing the responsibility for supporting or extending the learning of different pupils. Better teamwork between staff is evident throughout the school.
- Where teaching is more successful, teachers and teaching assistants have a good understanding of pupils' current abilities, as well as good knowledge of the subjects they are covering. Staff use their knowledge to create enjoyable activities that help pupils to develop their thinking.
- Across classes, teachers now give pupils helpful feedback about their learning, in line with school policies. In some classes, the quality of teaching is now of a consistently high standard.
- Homework is set regularly and in line with school policy. Staff encourage pupils and

parents about the value of such opportunities to support and extend their learning.

- Staff make sure that pupils stay on task and concentrate well in lessons. This means that little time for teaching is wasted.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. One of the most striking aspects of Lowerplace is the positive attitudes shown by pupils. They enjoy coming to school and want to learn. They show much self-confidence and are happy to talk with visitors, such as inspectors. They understand that they need to be skilled, thoughtful and hard-working to succeed at school and in life.
- Pupils are becoming respectful and considerate citizens. They understand the importance of respecting peacefully the views of other people. Pupils are aware of the democratic issues arising from the United Kingdom's referendum about leaving the European Union. They know the key issues arising from the recent United States presidential election.
- Pupils have a respectful understanding of a wide range of faiths including Christianity and Hinduism. While many pupils develop their understanding of Islam through attending their local mosque outside of school time, non-Muslim pupils in the school share a clear and accurate understanding of Islam.
- Pupils know that their feelings and their views matter to staff. They feel valued and listened to. They know that much help is available to them, if they were to feel unsettled or unhappy.
- Because staff give much emphasis to teaching pupils about being safe online, as much as when in their community or travelling next to busy roads, pupils develop a good understanding of safety. All pupils with whom inspectors spoke said they feel safe at Lowerplace. They say that bullying is not an issue in their school. They are confident that staff would address any issues immediately and successfully.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They show much self-discipline. They are sensible and thoughtful in managing their own feelings and behaviour. They show high standards of behaviour in the dining hall, outdoors, in corridors and across classrooms. They arrive at classes promptly and follow staff instructions well.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly average. While the level of persistent absence in 2016 was slightly above average, leaders work successfully to make sure that current pupils attend as much as possible.
- Staff organise classrooms well and make them attractive places for learning. Pupils treat displays, resources and furniture with respect.
- Even when teaching is not engaging, pupils show restraint and positive attitudes.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Some pupils do not make good progress in their reading, writing and mathematics. Past weaknesses in teaching and assessment mean that some pupils have a challenge to make up for lost ground in their learning. Lingering weaknesses in the teaching of some classes and subjects means pupils make uneven progress in their learning.
- Past weaknesses in the school's arrangements for assessing pupils mean that it is not possible to rely upon the accuracy of much past information about pupils' learning. There is no published information available about the achievement of Year 6 pupils in 2016.
- Some most-able pupils currently in the school are not achieving as much as they can. Some teaching does not deepen their skills and understanding enough.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are included fully in classroom life. The significant gaps which existed in previous years between the achievement of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and others are narrowing across the school. However, because of inconsistencies in the quality of support, some pupils are not making the progress they should.
- Current pupils' progress in science is increasing steadily because of recent improvements to the school's science curriculum and teaching.
- Because new assessment arrangements in the school are still developing, pupils' progress in the foundation subjects is less well identified by staff. Current pupils' work in Years 1 and 3 shows their progress in geography to be variable.
- A greater proportion of pupils in key stage 1 than key stage 2 are on track to do well in their learning in reading, writing and mathematics this summer. Nevertheless, there is work to do to address the ongoing variability in the quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2, to improve pupils' outcomes further.
- Pupil premium funding is being directed well towards strengthening the emotional well-being of disadvantaged pupils, and developing their confidence to approach new learning. This is helping pupils to believe in their own abilities. For example, pupils are now learning to play violin, clarinet and guitar with skill and confidence. Even so, disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as other pupils in some subjects and year groups.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the national assessment of their phonics skills in Year 1 declined to below average in 2016. This includes a drop in the proportion of disadvantaged pupils able to read skilfully. The decline reflects growing issues in the quality of teaching in the school at that time. As the result of improved teaching, many more current pupils now read well.
- Currently some pupils, for example in Years 2 and 6, make good progress in their mathematics skills and knowledge. They are becoming much more confident in their ability to solve complex problems and explain their thinking to others. Across key stages 1 and 2, pupils told inspectors that they enjoy their learning in mathematics.
- More pupils in key stage 1 and 2 now have the vocabulary, knowledge of spelling patterns and grammar they need for their writing, due to better teaching in recent



months.

- Across subjects, Pakistani-heritage girls do better in their learning than any other group of pupils.

### Early years provision

### Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching that children experience across activities and staff in the Reception classes is too uneven. Some work given to children is too easy and of little benefit to their learning. Some group activities that staff teach are laboured and uninspiring and do not excite and enthuse children. Children's progress is variable.
- The quality of assessment of children's learning is improving. However, staff do not consistently follow school policy to record a range of evidence to support their judgements. This means that staff do not always match children's next steps to their needs. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development is improving but is below the national average.
- The interim headteacher and deputy headteacher have a positive impact on galvanising early years staff about improvement. Staff want to improve their work and try different ways of working. However, some leaders do not have a sufficiently precise understanding of the priorities for improvement or what more the school needs to achieve.
- Where learning is most successful, teachers support and extend children's learning skilfully. For example, when teaching a group of less-able children about firefighters, a teacher used her own facial expressions, gesture and carefully chosen language to engage children when she read a story book. She was patient, listened to children's responses and used their comments well to extend the group's discussion. She made skilful use of her own questions to prompt children to think and to sustain their involvement in the activity. They wanted to know more.
- Through a frequent focus on children's communication and language skills, their mathematical abilities and their personal skills, children are gaining an adequate preparation for their learning in Year 1.
- Children behave well. Their relationships with other children and adults are positive. They are self-confident and feel settled in their groups.
- Senior leaders have supported staff to successfully transform the quality of the Reception unit this year. As a result, the classes work well as one integrated team. Children benefit from extensive opportunities to learn together. The large classroom space is organised thoughtfully. Learning areas are attractive, well-resourced and focused particularly on promoting children's language, communication, mathematics and problem-solving skills.
- Parents say that their children settle quickly in the Reception classes. Discussions between staff and parents are regular and help parents with supporting their children's learning at home.
- The provision and use of fiction and non-fiction books in children's learning is good.



## School details

Unique reference number	105777
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	10026776

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	499
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Kenmure
Interim Headteacher	Simon Moore
Telephone number	01706 648174
Website	<a href="http://www.lowerplace.net">www.lowerplace.net</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:headteacher@lowerplace.rochdale.sch.uk">headteacher@lowerplace.rochdale.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	4–5 June 2009

## Information about this school

- Lowerplace is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the government's pupil premium funding is above average.
- The large majority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, with a majority being of Pakistani heritage.
- The large majority of pupils speak English as an additional language. Thirty-nine different languages are spoken by pupils at the school.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is average.

- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The interim headteacher and deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2016 on secondment from other schools.
- The governing body has been reconstituted during the last year to increase the number of governors.
- The school is in receipt of extra help from the local authority to support improvement.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about governance, the curriculum, pupil premium strategy, provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, complaints, admissions, equality, PE and sports funding on its website.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time. They observed in all classrooms at least once. They checked pupils' work to see what learning and progress have been like since September 2016. The lead inspector conducted a series of joint observations with the interim headteacher.
- Inspectors held a number of meetings with the interim headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors met with a range of staff, including the leaders for early years, special education needs, mathematics, English, science, geography and history.
- The inspectors talked to parents as they brought their children to school. There were no parent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- The lead inspector met four members of the governing body, including the chair, and spoke with two representatives of Rochdale local authority.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in classes and around the school about behaviour, their personal development and their learning. The lead inspector spoke with 10 pupils chosen at random from Years 2 to 6.
- The inspectors considered a range of documents, including reviews of the school by the local authority and by school leaders, plans for improvement and policies.
- The inspectors checked school records relating to the care and protection of pupils.

## Inspection team

Tim Vaughan, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sheila O'Keeffe	Ofsted Inspector
Michelle Beard	Ofsted Inspector
Louise Smith	Ofsted Inspector
Margot D'Arcy	Ofsted Inspector

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