



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report
Burford Primary School

Oxfordshire Education Authority

Dates of inspection: 28-29 April 2004

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

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Basic information about the school

Name of school:	Burford Primary School
Type of school:	Infant and Junior
Status:	Community
Age range of pupils:	5 to 11 years
Headteacher:	Mrs E Stacey
Address of school:	Priory Lane Burford Oxfordshire OX18 4SG
Telephone:	01993 822159
Name and address of appropriate authority:	The governing body at the above address
Chair of governors:	Mrs J H Tivey
Local education authority area:	Oxfordshire
Unique reference number:	123014
Name of reporting inspector:	Mr M E Madden HMI
Dates of inspection:	28-29 April 2004

Introduction

1. Burford Primary School is situated in the small rural town of Burford and is of below average size. Its 94 pupils come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is, at about six per cent, well below the national figure. A broadly average proportion of the pupils are identified as having special educational needs. Many of the pupils enter the school after some pre-school education. The school has had difficulties in filling vacant teaching posts but has a full complement of teachers.
2. The school was inspected in January 2003 and was judged to have serious weaknesses. Despite sound provision for pupils' personal development and some good teaching, National Curriculum test results were deteriorating. Management of the school was unsatisfactory.
3. The school was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) in September 2003 to assess its progress.
4. In April 2004 two HMI inspected the school, assessing the standard of education provided and the further progress the school had made.

Main findings

5. In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school requires special measures, since it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. The main findings of the inspection are:
 - standards are too low. There has been significant underachievement. In 2003, the overall attainment of the pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 was below that of pupils elsewhere who had similar attainment when in Year 2;
 - the pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. It was satisfactory in eight lessons, including three of these in which it was good. There were, however, too many lessons in which learning was unduly restricted by a slow pace of work, shallow engagement on the part of many of the pupils or tasks that lacked demand, particularly for more capable pupils;
 - the pupils' attitudes and behaviour are in the main sound and in many lessons they were good. Most of the pupils are courteous, co-operative and approach lessons with interest and good will;
 - there is, however, a small minority of pupils who present difficulties for their teachers. In one class, wilful disregard for the teachers' reasonable instructions adversely affects the climate for learning;
 - rewards are used appropriately to recognise good behaviour or work. The use of sanctions is, however, underdeveloped. There have been no recent exclusions, but the school lacks a secure framework for the effective inclusion of its most challenging pupils;
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- the pupils' attendance is 93 per cent which is satisfactory but, below the national figure for primary schools. The pupils are in the main punctual in arriving at school, although a small number of them have particularly low rates of attendance;
 - provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, but it does not meet the needs of a small number of the pupils;
 - the overall quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. It was satisfactory or better in just nine of the 14 lessons, including three of them in which it was good;
 - unsatisfactory teaching occurred in each key stage. In five of the lessons the teacher's expectations were too low and the activities did not sufficiently motivate and challenge the pupils. More generally, too little use was made of the additional adults deployed as classroom assistants;
 - the school has collected useful information about the pupils' attainment at the end of each year and this informs the grouping of pupils during lessons. It also enables the staff to set targets for the pupils for each half-term and to measure pupils' progress more accurately. It is not, however, used sufficiently to match day-to-day work to the pupils' needs;
 - the curriculum is broad and its balance is appropriately biased towards literacy and numeracy. However, the balance of the curriculum and pupils' progress are not secure. In Key Stage 2, too little time is devoted to teaching and insufficient time is available for some subjects;
 - the school's long-term curriculum plan does not ensure continuity for pupils as they progress through the school. The teachers' short-term planning is not linked strongly enough to the school's arrangements for assessment;
 - provision for the Foundation Stage is unsatisfactory. Too often, the pupils' activities lacked the structure and focus required to promote and consolidate effective learning;
 - since the inspection in January 2003, the school has been led with some success by interim headteachers, provided and supported by the local education authority (LEA). Overall leadership has been transferred in the last few weeks to a new headteacher. Communications in the school are good. The school operates smoothly from day to day;
 - the management of improvement has relied largely on personnel from the LEA but it has lacked the benefits of continuity. Interim headteachers have focused on implementing the action plan. Evaluation has been conducted, but too little of it has been directed at improving the quality of teaching;
 - co-operation between the governing body and the LEA has helped to identify and avert a budget deficit. The school's capacity to spend is nevertheless restricted by relatively high staffing costs;
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- ideas are emerging about more flexible use of the staff and more effective organisation of classes, but plans to implement these are at an early stage of development;
- the governing body is increasingly active in monitoring the school. Governors are aware of the scope for further improvement and determined to ensure that the school thrives and grows in size;
- the school's action plan is being implemented satisfactorily. Reasonable progress has emerged with the planned work, but a considerable amount remains to be done by the new headteacher; the school's strategy for raising the pupils' attainment has been weakened by a decline in the quality of teaching.

Key issues

6. In order to improve the pupils' quality of education further, the governors, headteacher, senior managers, staff and LEA need to:

- develop and implement their new plans for the curriculum, the organisation of classes and the deployment of staff;
- improve the provision for the pupils in the Foundation Stage;
- improve the quality of teaching;
- generate a framework for effective inclusion of challenging pupils;
- strengthen the use of evaluation;
- raise pupils' attainment.

Inspection findings

Standards achieved by the pupils

7. The school's results in the national tests have fluctuated from year to year in both key stages, in part reflecting the small size of the school's year cohorts. In 2003, the overall attainment of the 12 pupils in Year 2 rose compared to that in 2002. It was broadly comparable to the national expectation for Level 2 and for the higher Level 3, particularly in mathematics. However, the attainment of the same pupils was relatively low in reading, and in both reading and writing it was below that of pupils in similar schools.

8. Results from Year 6 declined compared to those from 2002. The proportions of pupils who attained the expected level for their age were below those found nationally and well below those for pupils in similar schools. The pupils had, furthermore, made relatively modest progress through Key Stage 2. Their overall attainment was below that of pupils in other schools who had attained similar standards when in Year 2.

9. Recent testing of the pupils currently in Years 2 and 6 suggests that they are achieving at more appropriate levels. For example, standards in English at the end of Year 2 are satisfactory. The pupils write with a clear narrative structure. Sentences are usually complete and the more able pupils use more complex grammatical structures. The pupils confidently use punctuation and spell common words correctly. By the end of Key Stage 2 the pupils write effectively in a variety of styles with well organised and sustained development of ideas. They successfully write for different audiences and use increasingly complex sentences to express lively and thoughtful opinions. The school's reading rooms are inviting and the pupils choose books from among a good range. The pupils read a variety of books with sustained interest and enthusiasm and they read aloud with expression, fluency and usually with full comprehension of the content.

10. In mathematics, the pupils encounter an appropriately broad range of topics and activities in lessons that reflect, to a degree, the national scheme for numeracy. The younger pupils, for example, learned about mathematical conventions for classifying by applying them to everyday drinks. The pupils in Year 2 have sound experience of a wide range of topics and a healthy capacity to recognise shapes, group data and use number and operations such as doubling and dividing. In the Key Stage 2 classes, the pupils learn about a wider range of topics and the mathematics curriculum is being developed to include more investigative work. Pupils who have recently entered the key stage made sound progress in learning more about formal methods of addition. Booster activities have helped the pupils in Year 6 towards the expected levels of attainment. The quality of learning in mathematics is, nevertheless, unhelpfully varied across the school. For substantial proportions of the pupils, activities in numeracy lessons are too slow to start and too limited in demand. This is particularly so for the significant minority of pupils whose work is also slowed by their weak knowledge of number facts.

11. In science, the pupils in Key Stage 1 gain some knowledge about appropriate topics such as simple electrical circuits. Older pupils acquire a wider range of information, for example about the structure of the human body. However, exploration and investigation are not sufficiently developed as pupils progress through the school. The science curriculum is to be the subject of further staff training.

12. Standards are not secure in the Foundation Stage. The pupils enter in the reception year with attainment that is broadly average for their age. They develop confident talk and initiate conversations with ease. They recognise initial sounds in words, name written letters, handle books carefully and enjoy a range of stories. The pupils also count with confidence and recognise numbers. However, their mathematical vocabulary is weak and their knowledge of shapes and of their properties is insecure. While the pupils draw pictures and colour their work confidently, they unfortunately develop poor habits for writing.

13. Across the school, there is significant underachievement. Pupils' handwriting and other important skills develop too slowly. In Year 5, many of the pupils lack important basic skills and a relatively large proportion of the pupils have learning difficulties, and in some instances behavioural difficulties. Overall, standards are too low.

14. The pupils' achievement was satisfactory in eight of the lessons, including three of them in which it was good. In Year 6, for example, many of the pupils joined thoughtfully in mental mathematics applied to decimal numbers and then used this and other skills in a variety of appropriate arithmetic tasks. There were, however, too many lessons in which

learning was unduly restricted by a slow pace of work, shallow engagement on the part of many of the pupils or tasks that lacked demand, particularly for more capable pupils.

The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are in the main sound. They were at least satisfactory in 12 of the lessons, including seven in which they were good. Most of the pupils are courteous and co-operative. They moved sensibly about the school, were quick to settle and attentive to the speaker in their assembly; they collaborated in a variety of games and other activities during lunch time periods when they were confined indoors by wet weather.

16. In the main, the pupils attend to their teachers' instructions and use books and equipment with appropriate care. In better lessons, they engaged readily with their work, for example in exploring the use of computer language to control movement. Most of the pupils have adjusted well to the higher expectations brought by new leadership of the school. Warm mutual regard in one class provided a secure basis for constructive and helpful conversation between the pupils and their teacher. Rewards are used well to recognise good behaviour and work, for exemplifying by naming individuals as Burford Stars or Wonders of the Week, and by displaying good work in classrooms or corridors.

17. There is, however, a small minority of pupils who present difficulties for their teachers. In one class, wilful disregard for the teachers' reasonable instructions adversely affects the climate for learning. The use of sanctions and of behaviour improvement plans is underdeveloped in relation to these pupils, some of whom exercise inappropriate leadership in their classes, even at times challenging the authority of the headteacher. There have been no recent exclusions. Discipline and control of the school are secure but are left vulnerable by the lack of a secure framework of pre-exclusion and other arrangements for the effective inclusion of the most challenging pupils.

18. Attendance is satisfactory. Last year it was, at 95 per cent, close to the national figure for primary schools. This year so far it has declined a little to 93 per cent. The pupils are in the main punctual in arriving at school, but a small number of them have particularly low rates of attendance. The school is aware of the reasons for this and does what it can to encourage good attendance.

19. The school's provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. School assemblies regularly provide periods for reflection and collective worship. The pupils are taught stories from different religious traditions with a broad emphasis on the Christian faith. All but a small minority of the pupils have a keen sense of right and wrong and appreciate the need for rules in the classroom and outside during break times.

20. The pupils' views are represented by a school council which regularly meets to discuss agreed agendas. Two pupils are elected to represent each year group and they develop through the council a mature sense of responsibility and duty. Pupils reliably perform duties such as assembly monitors and escorts for visitors to the school. The range of provision meets many of the needs of the large majority of pupils, but it does not fully meet the needs of the small number who demonstrate inappropriate behaviour.

The quality of education

21. The quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in nine of the lessons, including three of them that were good. In a good religious education lesson, the teacher had clear plans and high expectations of the pupils. The use of time was closely planned so that pupils would engage in a number of different activities, including work with the whole class, in pairs and in groups. The teacher's good subject knowledge and confident delivery stimulated the pupils to work hard, and most learned effectively.

22. Overall, however, the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. It was inadequate in five of the lessons, with examples in each of the key stages, including the Foundation Stage. During these lessons, the teachers demonstrated a sound knowledge of the subjects taught but they did not expect enough of the pupils. The pace of work was too slow. Unduly long introductions quickly lost the interest of the more capable pupils and particularly of the older pupils in the youngest class. Planned activities neither challenged nor motivated the pupils sufficiently and as a result the pupils' interest was not maintained. Teaching assistants helped to direct the pupils' attention but they were not focused sufficiently on supporting learning.

23. The school has collected useful information about the pupils' attainment at the end of each year. This helpfully informs the teachers when grouping pupils during lessons. Targets for higher attainment are set for the pupils by the class teachers each half-term. Progress towards these is reviewed regularly and new targets are set as needed. Recently improved systems have enabled more accurate analysis and measurement of pupils' progress. All of the information gathered from assessment and analysis is readily available to the teachers. However, too little use is made of it to plan activities which accurately match the needs of the pupils. As a consequence, too many pupils spend time on tasks that are too easy for them.

24. The curriculum is broad. For Key Stages 1 and 2, it includes each of the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. Additional attention is paid through subject teaching and other short lessons to personal, social and health education and appropriate themes that contribute to the pupils' personal development, including citizenship.

25. The balance of the curriculum is biased appropriately towards literacy and numeracy teaching within the frameworks advocated nationally. Balance is, however, insecure. The overall time devoted to teaching is less than that recommended for pupils in Key Stage 2. Some foundation subjects receive only fragmented attention or relatively little time.

26. The school has a long-term curriculum plan and a system for medium-term planning. These provide helpful guidance for the staff, but they do not fully reflect the school's needs, particularly for ensuring continuity with progression as the pupils move through its various mixed age classes. The teachers' short-term planning is often detailed but it is not linked strongly enough to what is known as a result of assessment about the pupils' prior attainments.

27. Provision for the younger pupils is unsatisfactory. Pupils in reception and Years 1 and 2 are taught in a single class of 30 pupils. Their curriculum has the broad range of the Early Learning Goals for Foundation Stage pupils and of the National Curriculum for Key Stage 1. However, despite a substantial allocation of staff, too many of the planned activities

lacked the clarity of purpose, structure and support needed to promote and consolidate learning at the appropriate levels.

28. For the youngest pupils, play activities too often lacked structure and guidance and there were relatively few opportunities for the pupils to examine objects and living things or to explore similarities and differences. Their drawing was not complemented strongly enough by guidance to correct pencil grip and letter formation. The pupils in Key Stage 1 were often insufficiently engaged. Those in Year 2, for example, spent too much time waiting to start properly age-related activities or spent time in play using equipment intended for the youngest pupils.

29. The school's support for pupils who have special educational needs is improving, and overall it is satisfactory. The co-ordinator organises termly meetings with relevant parents, class teachers and pupils to review progress. These meetings identify appropriate targets that are recorded in individual education plans to inform some of the work of classroom assistants. There are, however, weaknesses in the school's provision. The learning targets are specific but the time allowed for their achievement is usually too long. Individual education plans do not address the significant behavioural difficulties of a small number of pupils. Class teachers do not reflect the targets for these pupils sufficiently in their day to day planning.

Leadership and management

30. Since the inspection in January 2003, the school has been led with some success by interim headteachers who were identified and provided for the governing body by the LEA. They and other LEA advisory and inspection personnel have supported the staff steadily in calming the school through a difficult period in which the previous headteacher resigned. In addition, they have reviewed important systems and directed attention and effective teaching to boost attainment at the ends of the key stages.

31. Overall leadership has been transferred in the last few weeks to a new headteacher who had been in post for just nine days at the start of the inspection. She teaches for half of each week, brings a calm and measured approach to leadership and has the confidence of the staff, the governors and the LEA. She is supported by a staff equivalent to a further 3.5 full-time teachers and a group of classroom and other assistants. The staff are deployed in proportion to need across the school's four classes.

32. Succession has been managed thoughtfully through a number of meetings between the interim headteachers and the new substantive headteacher. A pattern of meetings is well established and is used systematically for a variety of purposes including discussion, planning and training. Communications among the staff are effective and the school operates smoothly from day to day.

33. The governing body has received training from LEA personnel. It is increasingly active in monitoring the school. Governors are aware of the scope for better teaching and learning and they are determined to ensure progressive improvement so that the school thrives and grows in size.

34. Co-operation with the LEA has helped governors to identify and to avert a budget deficit. The school's scope for spending is restricted nevertheless by relatively high staffing

costs. Rational ideas are emerging for more economic and effective patterns of organisation of the classes and of the staff. However, plans are not yet laid to draw these ideas together.

35. The school has largely overcome its problems in recruiting staff. Its action plan is being implemented and reasonable progress has emerged with the planned work. Responsibilities are delegated for many areas of work and the role of co-ordinators in the school is growing. Management and leadership are nevertheless heavily dependent on the new headteacher and they have too little impact on the quality of education and on the pupils' progress.

36. The LEA has provided helpful support for the school through the recent difficult period. Leadership has been steadily focused on the action plan. However, the management of improvement has lacked the benefits of continuity. Evaluation by interim managers has focused on the action plan and it has clearly identified both areas of progress and residual deficiencies in developing the school's systems. However, it has paid insufficient attention to the quality of education across the curriculum. The school's strategy for raising the pupils' attainment has been weakened by a decline in the quality of teaching.

Implementation of the action plan

37. The school drew up an action plan to address the key issues and the serious weaknesses that were identified in January 2003. These related in the main to: inadequate management of the school; the limited use made of information to improve the pupils' progress; and regaining the confidence of parents.

38. Overall, too little progress has been made towards resolving those matters. New leadership has helped to stabilise the school and the attitudes of parents. Higher achievement is emerging for some of the pupils. Day to day management of the school is secure.

39. However, the teachers' planning is not yet supported strongly enough by the use of information gathered from assessment. The quality of teaching is not secured sufficiently by the use of evaluation and advice.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

The school was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in January 2003. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school. Despite sound provision for pupils' personal development and some good teaching, National Curriculum test results were deteriorating. Management of the school was unsatisfactory. The school was judged to have serious weaknesses.

The school was visited by HMI in September 2003 to assess its progress.

In April 2004, two HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Fourteen parts of lessons, one assembly and two registration sessions were inspected. The pupils were observed at break and lunch times and samples of their work were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior staff, the recent interim headteacher and the school's adviser and a school improvement officer from the LEA. Informal discussions were held with other staff and pupils. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised.

The inspection assessed the standard of education provided by the school and the further progress it has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of January 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address these key issues.

Notes

