



Inspection report

Burford Primary School

**Better
education
and care**

Unique Reference Number 123014
LEA Oxfordshire

Inspection number 276208
Inspection dates 6 and 7 July 2005
Reporting inspector Mr R Blatchford HMI

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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|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Type of School | Primary | School address | Priory Lane |
| School category | Community | | Burford |
| | | | Oxfordshire |
| Age range of pupils | 5 to 11 years | | OX18 4SG |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01993 822159 |
| Number on roll | 77 | Fax number | 01993 822792 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | Ms J Harman Tivey |
| Date of previous inspection | April 2004 | Headteacher | Mrs E Stacey |

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|---------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Age group | Published | Reference no. |
| 5 to 11 years | 13 September 2005 | 276208 |

Introduction

When Burford Primary School was inspected in April 2004, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools (HMI) subsequently visited the school on two occasions to monitor its progress, and reinspected the school in July 2005.

Description of the school

Burford Primary School, housed in a traditional Victorian building with more contemporary additions, is situated in the small rural town of Burford in West Oxfordshire. The school is below average size: its 77 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; no pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need. The pupils enter the school with attainment broadly in line with the national profile. The school has effective links with the community and within the Burford Partnership of schools.

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Overall effectiveness of the school

In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils.

Following a period of instability in staffing which led to the school being judged to have serious weaknesses, and subsequently requiring special measures, the school has moved from strength to strength under the determined leadership of the headteacher. Pupils are making satisfactory progress, and standards are rising steadily because of consistently good, focused teaching. Standards need to rise further, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. The pupils' behaviour is good and attitudes to learning are satisfactory. Provision in the Foundation Stage has improved, but is not as good as it needs to be; the legacy of previous underachievement is being addressed with rigour. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, and recent investments in resources have contributed to the overall improvement in provision. The teaching, support and administrative staff form a tight-knit team and have worked assiduously, to a common purpose, to effect improvements across all aspects of the school's work.

Improvement since the last inspection

The school has made significant improvement since the last inspection in April 2004, which required the school to address key issues concerned with the pupils' attainment, the curriculum and deployment of staff, the Foundation Stage, the quality of teaching, evaluation and assessment, and the management of the pupils. Satisfactory progress has been made in relation to the Foundation Stage, and there has been good progress with the other key issues.

Capacity to improve

Over the past year, the school has demonstrated the capacity to tackle its longstanding weaknesses. Attainment among all pupils is rising. Led by the headteacher, teamwork within the school is strong and there is a clear vision for the future. The headteacher's self-evaluation is perceptive, and builds well on surveys conducted among the pupils and parents. The school has the necessary systems and procedures upon which to build further improvements, although systems for monitoring some aspects of the school's work, including the quality of teaching and learning, are underdeveloped. Budget management is secure and the governors have an informed overview. The local education authority (LEA) is committed to a programme of close monitoring of the school to ensure that previous declines are not repeated.

What the school should do to improve further

The key priorities for the school's development plan are to:

- raise further the pupils' attainment;
- continue to develop the provision for the pupils in the Foundation Stage;
- extend the systems for monitoring teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

The school's year cohorts are small, and results in the national tests fluctuate from year to year in both key stages. The 2004 results showed that at Key Stage 1 the percentages of the pupils achieving the expected Level 2 or above in reading, writing and mathematics were well below those achieved in similar schools. The percentage of the pupils achieving Level 3 or above was also well below that of similar schools. At Key Stage 2 in 2004, the percentage of the pupils achieving the expected Level 4 or above in English, mathematics and science was well above the standards achieved by similar schools; the percentage of the pupils achieving Level 5 or above in English was below that achieved in similar schools, but the percentage was above in science and well above in mathematics.

The school's provisional results for 2005 at Key Stage 1 indicate a rising trend in achievement, both in the percentages of the pupils achieving Level 2 or above and Level 3 or above. Progress is most marked in mathematics. At Key Stage 2 for 2005, the unvalidated results show a decline in the core subjects, although the pupils in Year 6 are making satisfactory progress in lessons; the teacher has worked hard to fill in a number of gaps in the pupils' skills and knowledge, but the legacy of underachievement is reflected in their results. Standards in writing in Year 6 are below national expectations. The school's internal test results for Year 5 indicate that pupils are performing less well in mathematics than in English and science, although the realistic targets for Key Stage 2 in 2006 are more in line with national expectations.

The school knows well its pupils and their potential. Some higher-attaining pupils are not achieving the standards in both key stages of which they are capable. In the Foundation Stage, following a long period of underachievement, the school's assessment records show that the pupils are making satisfactory progress.

Personal development

Behaviour and attitudes around the site are good. The pupils enjoy their attractive school environment, and the atmosphere is one of calm and order, with the exception of unnecessarily high noise levels in the hall during lunch. The values of the school community are strong and clear to everyone; the pupils treat staff, each other and the school's resources with proper care and respect. Relationships are good. The school has taken decisive steps to ensure good behaviour in lessons and at break times. A well developed system of rewards is valued by the pupils, in particular the Gold Book and its accompanying assembly which invites parents to share in the celebration of high achievements by individual pupils. Sanctions are understood by the pupils and staff apply them consistently. There have been no exclusions this academic year. Attendance is in line with the national average for primary schools, and systems for monitoring any absences are meticulous and effective.

The pupils' attitudes to learning are much improved, and are satisfactory overall. Pupils in Year 6 identified how their own attitudes towards school have improved during the year as a result of diligent tutoring and teaching which have raised their expectations and self-esteem. The staff have sought to generate a real love of learning in classes, but a minority of the pupils display a lack of enthusiasm for their studies alongside variable skills in listening and independent learning. In lessons which involve practical learning, the pupils work well, both collaboratively and independently.

The school's provision for social, moral and spiritual education is good; it is satisfactory for cultural education. The assembly for the whole school, led by a visitor from the local church, was skilfully presented and motivated the pupils to reflect in depth on the words of The Lord's Prayer. The pupils enjoy a range of extracurricular activities organised and run by staff, including environment, sport, computer, Jesus & Me, and homework clubs. Visitors to the school and trips out, including residential visits, strengthen the provision.

The pupils feel safe and are made aware of healthy eating and lifestyle options. The pupils enjoy their delightful paddock as a place for recreation and socialising. The school council has played an important part in determining some of the day-to-day aspects of the school's practice, including the shaping of the Burford Buzzwords, the creation of an effective buddy system, designing the rota for playtime games and enterprising fund-raising.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the April 2004 inspection. It was good in all lessons and very good in two. Good teaching was rooted in clear short and mid-term planning, with a thoughtful awareness of links between different curriculum subjects; the teacher's secure knowledge of the pupils' prior attainment; and questioning of the pupils which was inclusive and pressed them to develop beyond one-word answers and explain why or how something happened. Teaching was especially effective when the teachers' planning and preparation of resources were expertly focused on the pupils' starting points and interests. In the best lessons, the precise and engaging teaching led the pupils to make very good progress, and gain real enjoyment alongside learning new skills and knowledge. A Year 5/Year 6 lesson on geology and a lower juniors lesson on changing materials by heating both gave a high level of consistent challenge to all pupils, and the fun of learning was palpable.

The quality of learning matched that of the teaching in most lessons; mixed listening and concentration skills from a small minority of the pupils hindered their good progress in a couple of lessons. Weak basic standards of presentation remain for some pupils, although they are being constantly challenged now by teachers, and the pupils are expected to present written work to a clear specification. In all lessons, time was used productively by even the more reticent pupils. Teaching assistants are better briefed and more involved in the planning of lessons than they once were, although the quality of their guidance for pupils varies.

The environment for the Foundation Stage, both indoors and outdoors, is much improved; there is a sense of children moving with purpose and enjoyment between different activities, and staff intervening in a planned way. The careful development of the pupils' oral and written language has led to marked progress for some pupils. The displays of pupils' work are eye-catching and were commented upon engagingly by the pupils, particularly the Reading Around the World posters. A new system for weekly planning gives a coherent view to all staff about planned outcomes for the pupils, and how their progress is assessed. Support staff have started to meet the particular needs of one pupil who speaks English as an additional language. The actions which were required following an audit of environmental improvements have still to be completed.

The use of assessment in all classes has improved, and is now satisfactory overall. The school has rightly identified the importance of adopting a common system for tracking the pupils' progress in different classes. Individual education plans for pupils are in place and reviewed with parents each term. Marking is regular, supportive and informative, although more could be done in Key Stage 2 to link marking meaningfully to the National Curriculum levels at which the pupils are

working. The monitoring and scrutiny of books are inconsistent, and target-setting is not integral to all teaching.

The curriculum is suitable for the needs of the pupils and meets statutory requirements; French will be taught from September 2005. Sensible arrangements are planned for the three mixed-age classes from September 2005. Accommodation and resources are fit for purpose and the school has imaginative plans to make the best use of its spaces for teaching and learning, including raising the profile of the school library. Facilities for information and communication technology (ICT) are good and the teachers' imaginative use of interactive whiteboards in all classes broadens styles of learning for the pupils. Particularly effective use of ICT was seen in a lower junior mathematics lesson and in a music session in the Foundation Stage.

The school has continued to keep parents and the wider community informed of achievements and developments, including the good use of notice-boards in the school playground. Surveys conducted with parents, including questions about possible extended-day services, school uniform and teaching methods, have made an important contribution to school development planning.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good overall; the co-ordination of subjects is satisfactory. The headteacher's self-evaluation document is strong and reflects how she has been able to balance challenge and support for the staff and pupils over the past 12 months, in order to effect the requisite improvements. However, much rests with the headteacher, and the school has wisely considered the need to distribute tasks and responsibilities more widely from September 2005. The headteacher's plans for her own role are timely, enabling her to monitor more systematically the quality of teaching and learning, and take a much-needed overview of the provision for higher-attaining pupils and for those who have special educational needs. The proposed roles and responsibilities for other staff fit convincingly alongside the whole-school priorities for future development, and careful consideration has been given to the implications for staff and pupils in implementing workforce reforms. Staff training throughout the year has been suitably focused on work scrutinies, literacy intervention, special educational needs and target-setting, but further work remains in providing suitable training for teaching assistants. The 2005–06 school improvement plan is well judged, sets challenging success criteria, and evinces a clear vision for the future development of the school.

The governing body continues to provide valued and useful support to the headteacher, and is holding her to account with rigour; the committee structure is

appropriate for the needs of the school. One governor has been linked to each key issue for improvement, and minutes of meetings record trenchant and challenging dialogue between governors and staff. The governors have properly recognised the priority of raising the profile of the school within the community, and expanding the number of pupils on roll. In recent months the LEA has worked well with the school, offering effective and appropriate advisory support as well as assistance with staffing and personnel matters.

The headteacher, staff and governors have a secure determination to consolidate the good gains of this academic year, and provide the stable and stimulating learning environment which the pupils deserve.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

Burford Primary School was inspected by HMI in April 2004. 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. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in October 2004 and in February 2005 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of April 2004.

In July 2005, one HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, and was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Nine lessons, two registration sessions and an assembly were inspected. The pupils' conduct was observed around the school and on the playground at break and lunchtimes, and samples of their work were inspected. Discussions were held with the headteacher, the chair of governors, groups of pupils, representatives from the LEA, and informally with other staff. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of April 2004 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

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