



Bowker Vale Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105397
LEA Manchester
Inspection number 277350
Inspection dates 24 May 2006 to 25 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Marie Cordey CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Middleton Road
School category	Community		Crumpsall
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Manchester, Lancashire M8 4NB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 740 5993
Number on roll	313	Fax number	0161 795 9694
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Jack Taylor
Date of previous inspection	6 March 2000	Headteacher	Mr Ian Lawton

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large school, situated in a suburb of Manchester. The majority of pupils are White British. A large proportion is of minority ethnic heritage. The proportion of pupils whose first language is other than English is above average. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is almost twice the national average. There are fewer pupils than average who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, although the proportion with statements of special educational needs is above average. The headteacher has been in post since September 2005.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Bowker Vale is a caring school that provides a satisfactory standard of education and satisfactory value for money. Standards are broadly in line with national averages by Year 2 and Year 6 and pupils make satisfactory progress. Standards in writing and in problem solving are slightly below average. This is because work is not always well matched to provide sufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils. Pupils in the Nursery and Reception class make an effective start to their school life because of support for their personal development and sound teaching. The school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses but an over-optimistic view of itself - largely because of the confidence in the new headteacher's determination to raise standards. The school judges that all aspects of its provision and standards are good, but inspectors judge these to be satisfactory. Whilst checks are made on the quality of teaching and learning, these are not sufficiently rigorous. Assessment information is not used consistently to track how pupils are performing and then to target improvement. Some pupils are not aware of how they are doing in their work or how to improve it. Pupils' good spiritual development is attributable to the deliberate fostering of care, tolerance and respect by the school. Pupils are well safeguarded and good partnerships, for example with outside agencies, are particularly beneficial to the most vulnerable pupils. The headteacher, staff and governors are committed to improving standards and achievement and embedding this in all of the school's work. There is satisfactory capacity for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing and problem solving and provide more challenge for higher attaining pupils to enable them to reach their potential.
- Ensure that assessment systems to track and evaluate pupils' progress are consistently applied and the information gained is used to inform pupils and set them appropriate improvement targets.
- Implement more rigorous monitoring systems to evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and learning

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils enter the school with standards that are broadly average and make satisfactory progress throughout the school because of positive teaching and care for their personal development. By the end of their time in the Nursery and Reception classes most pupils reach the expected standard for their age. The school's results in national tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are broadly in line with national averages, although the proportion of pupils who gain higher levels in mathematics and writing is below average. This is reflected in some lessons that are insufficiently adapted to meet the wide range of pupils' needs, particularly in the level of challenge provided to pupils who are capable of reaching higher levels. Pupils enjoy

reading and basic calculations and they are more skilled in these than in writing and problem solving. Writing is beginning to improve by using real life situations as a stimulus; for example, the sophisticated vocabulary and descriptions of nature made by pupils during a walk in the local park. Pupils in Year 6 are on course to meet their challenging targets in 2006. Standards and achievement in reading continue to improve, especially for middle attaining pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Pupils enjoy being at school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is satisfactory overall. Their spiritual development is good. Pupils become increasingly aware of how to look after themselves and others, and this is evident in the meditation programme being followed by pupils in Year 6. Pupils work and play together harmoniously and diversity is celebrated. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is appropriate. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that although they have been aware of a little bullying, they can rely on adult help to deal with it. A small number of parents who are concerned about bullying agree that any incidents are dealt with quickly. The school takes parental concerns seriously. Attendance is satisfactory and managed effectively. Pupils are encouraged to adopt safe and healthy lifestyles and the school council has been instrumental in bringing about positive changes in school life. It has sought the provision of games equipment for use at playtimes, and has raised funds to help provide this. Pupils' basic skills, along with their ability to work together, prepare them adequately for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with elements of good practice. A positive learning environment is created, where teachers work with enthusiasm and develop effective working relationships with their pupils. This was demonstrated well in literacy lessons in Year 2 and Year 4. Pupils respond well to the staff's expectations of behaviour both in the classroom and around the school, although some pupils exhibit challenging behaviour. Most teaching is appropriately planned with work that is matched to pupils' needs. However, higher attaining pupils are not always given a sufficient level of challenge, in part because plans do not always cater for the pupils' wide range of attainment. A variety of activities has been developed for pupils in the Foundation Stage. The school is developing procedures for checking how well pupils are doing and involving them more in their learning. There are good examples of marking, for example in Year 2 and Year 6. However, this is not the case for all pupils, some of whom are unclear about how well they are doing and how they can improve their work. Teachers and learning assistants work closely together to ensure that pupils

who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language make similar progress to other pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory and meets national requirements. Overall, it is appropriately matched to the needs of the pupils, although planning to challenge higher attaining pupils is inconsistent. Pupils' use of information and communication technology is being developed across a wider range of subjects and interactive whiteboards are used effectively in lessons to promote pupils' learning. The curriculum is enriched by a variety of extra-curricular activities and by promoting visits outside school. For example, pupils in Year 4 enthused about a visit to the theatre, for which they had been well prepared by a visiting theatre group. The teaching of modern foreign languages encourages pupils to develop their linguistic skills. Lessons in personal and health education ensure that the pupils are aware of how to take care of themselves as well as how to be good citizens.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

This is a very caring school that places a high priority on the pupils' welfare. Good links with outside agencies increase the level of support available and the school works hard to ensure that all pupils are safeguarded. Arrangements for child protection are well managed and regularly reviewed. Pupils say they have adults in school they feel comfortable to talk to. However, there are some weaknesses in the academic guidance and support given to pupils. Whilst some targets for improvement are realistic and generally sensitively matched to individual pupils, others do not provide sufficient challenge. This limits pupils' progress, especially that of higher attainers. The support offered to pupils whose first language is other than English and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good because of early identification of their needs and the provision of learning mentors. Children are well prepared for joining the school and strong partnerships with the local high school ensure that pupils' transition to secondary school is smooth.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory at all levels and the school has a sound capacity to improve further. The new headteacher is a committed leader whose vision of raising standards is a model for the staff. Leaders are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and these are reflected in their priorities for improvement. They are over optimistic in their judgements because they can see that initiatives to improve standards and achievement are beginning to take effect and are confident that the school will improve further. Systems to improve assessment and raise standards in literacy have begun to bring about improvement especially in

pupils' writing. However, self-evaluation is insufficiently rigorous because the quality of teaching and learning is not monitored and evaluated well enough to measure the impact of teaching and to model and share the good practice. Arrangements for assessment are not embedded enough to make sure that pupils' progress can be tracked and evaluated sufficiently. The school is now poised to improve standards and raise achievement by its priority of involving all staff in systematic planning and evaluation of performance. The governing body is very supportive. Finances are effectively monitored and governors hold the school to account.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming us to your school, you were very friendly and looked after us well. The things we particularly liked were:

- the way you are cared for and kept safe
- the calm and peace you show because you are taught to think about yourself and others
- that you eat healthily and take physical exercise seriously.

We have asked your new headteacher and the other staff to make your school better and we think they can do this by:

- providing more challenging work for the higher performing pupils
- raising standards in writing and problem solving
- using the information from assessment and the checking of your progress to improve your achievement.