



# Lowerplace Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 105777  
**LEA** Rochdale  
**Inspection number** 277407  
**Inspection dates** 19 June 2006 to 20 June 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr James Kidd CfBT Lead Inspector

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Kingsway
<b>School category</b>	Community		Rochdale
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11		Lancashire OL16 4UU
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01706 648174
<b>Number on roll</b>	386	<b>Fax number</b>	01706 712660
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr A Blacker
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	19 June 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs E Hibbert

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 19 June 2006 - 20 June 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 277407
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

This is a larger than average two-form entry school, situated about three miles from the centre of Rochdale. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and the percentage with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are above average. Almost half the pupils are from minority ethnic groups and many of them have English as an additional language. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below average and is declining over time. Lowerplace Primary holds the Healthy Schools Bronze Award.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Lowerplace is a rapidly improving and very inclusive school, which provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. Inspectors agree with most of the judgements in the self-evaluation form but believe that the school has underestimated the quality and range of its curriculum. In view of the impressive progress that has been made in the last 18 months, the school has good capacity to improve further.

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are below average but, because of the strong commitment to raising attainment, they are improving, particularly in mathematics and science. English, writing and comprehension in particular, remain areas of concern. The newly established Foundation Stage unit is satisfactory, and pupils make good progress in their social skills. Provision for outdoor play is, however, underdeveloped. Pupils' personal development is good and they appreciate the many opportunities they have to take initiative, such as when boys and girls in Year 6 teach pupils in Year 2 about natural and synthetic materials. Teaching is satisfactory overall but the challenge for more able pupils is not consistently high enough. Marking is variable and pupils are sometimes not fully aware of what they need to do to improve. Care, support and guidance are good. There is detailed tracking of progress and targets are set with pupils to foster higher standards. The curriculum is broad and balanced and there is a wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities. Parents and pupils are very positive about everything the school tries to do.

Leadership and management are good, overall. The inspirational leadership of the headteacher, who is ably supported by the deputy headteacher, the leadership and curriculum teams, provides clear educational direction. The decline in achievement has been reversed as a result. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in literacy, particularly in comprehension and writing.
- Improve the quality of teaching across the school, in order that the more able pupils are challenged to reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Improve the consistency in the quality of marking so that all pupils are aware of their progress and how they may reach higher standards.
- Develop outdoor activities in the Foundation Stage in order to build upon the strengths of the indoor curriculum.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Standards are rising but are below average overall. However, achievement across the school is satisfactory and, from a low base, improved markedly in 2005, when pupils responded positively to the challenging targets set for them. Inspection evidence demonstrates that this improvement is being maintained.

Pupils' attainment on entry has been declining over time and is now well below the expected level for their age. However, pupils make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage and reach average standards in their social development. Although improving, standards by the end of Year 2 are still well below average but are higher than they were in 2003. Following a marked downward trend for two years, standards at the end of Key Stage 2 improved significantly in 2005. Attainment in science is now broadly average, but it is still below in mathematics and well below in English. Writing and comprehension skills remain well below national expectations. The school is under-represented at the higher National Curriculum levels and the more able pupils do not always reach the standards of which they are capable. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls, nor between the performance of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and the white indigenous population. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do as well as others.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and underpin all the school's work. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in parental opinion. As one parent commented, 'My children are proud to be associated with Lowerplace School.' Pupils behave well, contribute to mutually supportive relationships and are keen to make the most of what their school has to offer. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and serves to establish good habits for pupils' future lives. Pupils are both confident and courteous and make valued contributions to improvement of the school community through an active school council, the 'laser' initiative, 'playground pals' and peer mediation. They take great pride in the impact of their work. Pupils' support for a wide range of charity appeals is particularly impressive.

Pupils are safety conscious from an early age and talk eagerly about healthy lifestyles. As they say, 'We all need fruit and vegetables every day to keep us healthy!'

Despite the school's sterling efforts, attendance remains below average but is improving steadily. Whilst the foundations for pupils' future well-being have been laid, the necessary skills of literacy and numeracy require further focus and development.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with examples of good practice in all key stages. There is focused support for all pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those new to learning English. Both teachers and teaching assistants treat their pupils with the utmost dignity. In good lessons, pupils are fully engaged in the activities and take responsibility for their own learning. In an impressive Year 4 numeracy session, for example, pupils moved independently and with enthusiasm between a range of thought-provoking mathematical activities, some involving the

use of computers. The school recognises, however, that in some lessons, the pace is slow and pupils spend too little time working on their tasks. In addition, there is insufficient challenge for the more able pupils to do their best and this hampers their achievement. In most lessons, pupils behave well, enjoy discussing with their talk partners and welcome visitors into their classrooms, of which they are very proud. As they say, 'We enjoy our school because our teachers make the lessons fun.'

Assessment is generally good and tracking systems to identify progress are well developed. Similarly, pupils are fully aware of their targets in literacy and numeracy and talk convincingly of what they need to do to meet them. The quality of marking is inconsistent. It varies from outstanding practice, which celebrates success and in which learners are required to evaluate their own progress, to cursory comment, which often overlooks basic errors.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school judges the curriculum to be satisfactory but inspectors believe it is good and that it meets the needs of most pupils. In some lessons, however, it is not adapted well enough to challenge the more able pupils to reach for even higher standards. The Foundation Stage curriculum is satisfactory overall but needs further development in the provision of outdoor play. The impressive range of activities outside lessons ensures that learners enjoy school. A wide array of whole-school activities, the recent 'creative week' for example, together with a wealth of visits and visitors, ensure that pupils experience many stimulating activities, which make them want to learn. A strong feature of curricular provision is the emphasis on the richness and diversity of the religions and heritages represented in the school. Pupils have a keen awareness of their own and other cultures as a result. Year 5 pupils have opportunities to study French or German through links with a local secondary school. The 'Lowerplace loves Language' display also celebrates the linguistic talents of its pupils and highlights that many of them speak two or even three languages fluently. There is a comprehensive programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education, which supports all aspects of pupils' learning well and within which enjoyment, achievement and basic skills are fostered.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The care given to the pupils is good and a high priority is placed on ensuring their safety, welfare and happiness. Substantial time is spent in contact with agencies that provide extra support. Child protection procedures are in place and pupils say they have adults in school to whom they feel comfortable to talk. They add also that 'playground pals' and peer mediators do much to help them when they are experiencing difficulty.

Academic guidance is good overall and detailed records of pupils' progress are kept. This comprehensive screening process ensures that support for a wide range of pupils' individual needs is carefully targeted in an effective manner. On occasion, the guidance

offered to higher attaining pupils is insufficient to ensure that they make the most of the skills they possess and quality of marking is inconsistent.

The support offered to pupils is good. The work undertaken by all staff, as pupils move through the different stages of education, is effective. Pupils are given support of good quality throughout the school day, and during visits.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have the confidence of staff, governors, pupils and parents. They have acted with vision and resolve over the last 18 months to halt the decline in achievement and lead the school through a period of marked improvement. The headteacher is an inspirational leader who is fully committed to raising standards and providing a richly diverse curriculum for her pupils.

Governors know the school well and fulfil all their responsibilities. They have an accurate picture of the pupils' standards and achievement, together with a clear understanding of how efficiently resources are used to achieve value for money. They are well aware of the challenges the school faces. Senior managers work as a coherent team, supporting their colleagues well, offering advice and monitoring teaching effectively. The staff are united and speak with one voice: 'We are together on a journey towards improvement, with some distance still to go!'

Parents and pupils are strongly in favour of what the school has to offer and there are high levels of enjoyment in learning throughout the school. There are good opportunities for adults and pupils to express their views and opinions in order to have a positive influence on actions taken.

The school has a clear and accurate picture of its strengths and areas for further development. All staff are fully aware that more needs to be done to improve teaching, to challenge the more able pupils and to raise standards, particularly in English. Pupils' individual performance is monitored carefully and analysed frequently, thus ensuring that improvements in standards are clearly identified and progress documented. Capacity to improve further is good.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	2	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

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

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	NA

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	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	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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 being so friendly and polite when we visited your school recently. You gave us such a warm welcome and we enjoyed our time with you and your teachers. We would now like to tell you what we think about your school.

What we like most

- We think Lowerplace is an improving school and that standards in mathematics and science are getting better.
- We know that you are very proud of your school and we are so pleased that you behave well in lessons and in the playground.
- We believe that your teachers and teaching assistants teach you, care for you and look after you well. We also think that the Playground Pals and Peer Mediators do a lot to help pupils who sometimes find things difficult.
- We are sure that your headteacher and deputy headteacher know how to make your school even better!

What we have asked your school to do now

- We want you to work hard with your teachers to improve your work in writing and comprehension.
- We would like your teachers to try even harder to challenge everyone to do their best so that all of you can reach the levels you deserve.
- We think it would be good if there were more opportunities for children in the Foundation Stage to learn by playing outside.

We had a lovely time at Lowerplace and really enjoyed watching you learn. We wish you well for the future.