



Brownlow Fold Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105149
Local Authority Bolton
Inspection number 287136
Inspection dates 14–15 February 2007
Reporting inspector Sarah Drake

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Darley Street
School category	Community		Bolton
Age range of pupils	3–11		Lancashire BL1 3DX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01204 333511
Number on roll (school)	307	Fax number	01204 526670
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Michael Kilcoyne
		Headteacher	Mrs Janet Pearson
Date of previous school inspection	9 December 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	14–15 February 2007	287136

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average school has a large Nursery from which more than half the children move on to other schools. It serves an inner urban area which has significant pockets of deprivation and it shares the site with the local community centre. Two thirds of pupils belong to minority ethnic groups and between them pupils speak 10 languages other than English. A small minority are refugees, asylum seekers or international Travellers and increasing numbers of pupils of all ages arrive at the school with no experience of learning English. A slightly larger than average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities including some with statements of special educational need. Three new class teachers have joined the school in the current academic year. In addition, the headteacher and deputy headteacher both took up their posts in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This good school provides its pupils with an increasingly interesting and relevant education which broadens their horizons and provides them with a strong base on which to build their future lives. It provides good value for money. Parents greatly appreciate the school's efforts on behalf of their children. Typical of their comments is: 'There have been many changes to the school in the past few months. I feel my son's work has improved due to this and his new teacher has really helped him enjoy school and feel a sense of achievement.'

Pupils of different abilities and ethnicity all achieve well in response to the good quality teaching and curriculum. The skills of children entering are low, as are those of many older pupils who arrive higher up the school, largely due to their weak communication skills. Standards at the end of Year 6 are below average. Children enjoy a magical and exciting experience in Nursery where they make rapid progress. The school's great care to prepare them for their move into the main building bears fruit so that they move up to the Reception class with little upset and a firm understanding that learning is fun. Pupils' progress in the Foundation Stage has been good for many years, and with the new arrangements that are now in place, this good progress continues throughout the school.

During her period as deputy headteacher, the current headteacher began to instigate changes and introduced systems for monitoring pupils' academic progress. These have already helped to raise standards but the monitoring information is not readily accessible, so the progress of individuals and different groups from one year to the next is not easy to follow. Similarly, all classes identify specific areas relating to reading, writing and mathematics to concentrate on, which change on a half-termly basis. However, in their marking teachers seldom refer to these, nor do pupils have individual targets to guide them towards achieving the next level in their work.

Strong relationships abound in this harmonious community where pupils' personal development is of good quality. All staff provide pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the many for whom English is an additional language, with positive support and guidance which help them to grow in confidence and concentrate fully on their work. As one pupil commented, 'This is a really good school: if you get stuck with a problem you don't have to be afraid because you know how to check your brain, your book, your buddy then the boss (the teacher) for help.' Staff and governors are aware of an issue relating to security which they are working to resolve.

A tangible momentum for improvement permeates the school where both new and long-standing staff members are working together with a real sense of determination to help pupils achieve their potential. Leadership and management are good. The school's self-evaluation is accurate but because of leaders' very high expectations, is too self-critical when assessing the improvements already made to pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and the curriculum. One pupil's comment, 'The headteacher

says, "Go on, you can do it". and we can!' elegantly sums up the spirit of the place. There is ample capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Refine the systems for tracking pupils' progress so that the information contained is easy to access, identifies the progress of individuals and groups and can be used more effectively to target both support and challenge.
- Sharpen up the procedures for setting targets and develop closer links between these and teachers' marking.
- Resolve the security issue.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Many children enter the school with weak all-round skills and very limited English, or speaking none at all. In the stimulating Foundation Stage environment they make good progress, especially in their personal and physical development, but their communication skills in particular are still well below average by the time they enter Year 1. Although overall standards at the end of Year 6 are below average, they have risen over the past two years and in mathematics over three years. In 2006, Year 6 pupils' achievement was particularly good when compared to their standards at the end of Year 2. Accurate identification of individuals' needs and well targeted support are helping pupils of different abilities and ethnicities to make good progress in their learning. With increasingly good quality teaching throughout the school and a revamped curriculum which excites pupils' interest, the rate of progress is speeding up impressively.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development means that the school operates as a happy, harmonious community. Pupils are friendly, polite and thoughtful about the effect of their actions on others so that they behave well. They readily welcome newcomers and fully involve in their activities those with physical disabilities and those who have little English. From the youngest upwards, they put into good practice their understanding of how to stay safe and healthy and respond very positively to the recently introduced rules and behaviour systems. As one commented, 'I used to have a lot of detentions, but not any more.' Year 6 pupils act as highly efficient and motivating play leaders for younger children. The school council has a strong presence through, for example, taking others' suggestions to senior management or its innovative fundraising activities to buy more playground equipment. Pupils collaborate well and understand about working hard. They thoroughly enjoy their learning and are keen to share their new knowledge with others. Through much concerted effort and working with parents, attendance levels and pupils' punctuality have improved markedly on last year and are now satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

In most lessons, stimulating and enthusiastic teaching engages pupils' interest so that they want to learn, and therefore make good progress. Varied activities, many of which are hands-on, good pace and excellent relationships ensure that pupils behave well and enjoy their work. One pupil highlighted as a strength of the school: 'How we learn is not just by writing and writing, but by doing it.' Pupils enthusiastically use the role-play areas, such as the Year 6 travel agency, which along with in-lesson discussions successfully help to develop their speaking and listening skills. Well trained teaching assistants provide good support in lessons and for the many small groups that work busily in the well organised and enticingly resourced general areas. The school has worked hard, with increasingly positive results, to help parents support their children's academic progress. Teachers use the information gained from assessing pupils' work when planning activities and they mark the work supportively. However, marking does not relate to whole-class targets, nor does it make sufficiently clear to individuals what they need to do to reach the next level in their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is developing apace. The links now forged between subjects, including the use of information and communication technology, are making pupils' learning more interesting and enjoyable. The recent push given to developing pupils' speaking and listening skills has increased their confidence and helped them to understand what they are learning. The planning for English, mathematics and science is being adapted well to meet the needs of the school's diverse population and this is helping to raise achievement in these subjects. The impressive Foundation Stage curriculum helps children acquire a strong desire to learn through experiencing exciting activities. They learn to play and share together and language barriers do not appear to hinder this personal development at all. Older pupils say that the personal and social education helps them to stay safe and adopt healthy lifestyles. Increasing school clubs, visits and visitors greatly add to pupils' enjoyment and help them develop good social and teamwork skills in preparation for their futures. As one pupil commented, 'We are still working but in a different way.'

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Very good relationships between pupils and staff create a caring and supportive atmosphere throughout the school. Pupils are encouraged to develop their own ways of resolving any upsets, but as one commented, 'Teachers are always there to sort things out.' Good quality support, including help from outside agencies and links with parents, enables new arrivals and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

to make the most of the opportunities available in school. Pupil well-being is paramount and underpinned by robust arrangements to promote child protection and health and safety. Well thought out lunchtime procedures ensure that pupils are well cared for and kept safe. Pupils' academic and personal development is tracked but teachers' marking does not provide consistent enough guidance about how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Under the determined and sensitive direction of the headteacher, the recently formed senior leadership team has high expectations and provides good quality leadership and management. The team's shared vision and effective actions are helping to ensure that pupils are fired up with their learning and make good progress. The system for monitoring pupils' progress is satisfactory but not yet sufficiently user-friendly to be of maximum benefit. Improvement planning is based on detailed analysis of a range of information, is prioritised and sets clear, measurable success criteria related to pupils' achievement. The emphasis placed on mentoring and coaching staff to develop performance in the classroom and subject leadership is bearing fruit. Teaching is increasingly focused and all staff are working together well as they understand their individual accountability for raising standards. The decision to divide responsibilities between two subject leaders - one for speaking and one for reading and writing - is providing strong impetus to these areas, which are of particular importance given the diverse nature of the school's population. The school runs very smoothly and staff are deployed well. Governors are supportive and greatly appreciate receiving the additional information that is helping them to make a start on holding the school to account.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for greeting us so warmly when we visited your school just before half term. It was good to see and hear how much you enjoy being pupils at Brownlow Fold. Our visit was part of the inspection system for the whole country which assesses how well pupils are learning. You gave us lots of reasons why you think that yours is a good school. These are some of our reasons for agreeing with you.

- Good quality relationships make the school operate as a happy community.
- The youngest children, particularly in Nursery have a fabulous time at school.
- You clearly understand that you are at school to learn so you work hard and behave well.
- Staff take good care of you and you are helpful towards each other so you are full of confidence.
- Your teachers organise interesting lessons with lots of practical things to do and links between different subjects so that learning is fun.
- Those of you who do not speak English at home or have other reasons for finding it difficult to learn are given lots of helpful support.
- Your headteacher and other senior leaders know what needs to be done to improve things and have already made changes that are helping you to make better progress.

To make the school even better, we have asked the headteacher and staff to:

- make the information they keep about your progress easier to use so that teachers can quickly identify who needs more support and who needs to be challenged more
- mark your work more helpfully so that you are quite clear about what you need to do to reach the next level
- find ways to make the school site more secure.

Your job will be to attend as often as possible and continue to enjoy learning.