



Bowburn Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114087
Local Authority Durham
Inspection number 289804
Inspection dates 13–14 February 2007
Reporting inspector Penny Parrish

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Surtees Avenue
School category	Community		Bowburn, Durham
Age range of pupils	7–11		County Durham, DH6 5DZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 3770497
Number on roll (school)	167	Fax number	0191 377 2710
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Jen Syer (Acting chair)
		Headteacher	Mrs Lynne E Lyons
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school, serving Bowburn, a former mining village close to the city of Durham. Pupil numbers are falling, despite the recent addition to the neighbourhood of a private housing estate. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average, as is the number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The number with statements to meet their special educational needs is average. Most pupils are of White British background and a small number have a minority ethnic heritage including a few in the early stages of learning English.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Bowburn Junior is a satisfactory school that is improving. Standards are average and pupils' achievement and progress are satisfactory. With support from the local authority, standards are back on track after a period of inconsistency when pupils were not achieving well enough. In 2006, results in national tests in Year 6 showed significant improvement on previous years. They are above average in mathematics and science, and broadly average in English. Most pupils make satisfactory progress with less able pupils making good progress; although, too few of the more able pupils reach higher levels, particularly in English and mathematics. Pupils are on course to meet the challenging targets set for pupils in Year 6 this year.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving. Although examples of good and sometimes outstanding teaching were observed, evidence shows that it is taking longer than the school wanted to consolidate and improve the quality. For instance, full use of the school's new assessment systems to tailor teaching plans to pupils' specific learning needs has to become fully established.

The curriculum is satisfactory but its organisation and that of the teaching of specialist teachers and organisation of ability groups is too complex. This hinders staff in making coherent plans to meet pupils varying learning needs. Teaching assistants are skilled in promoting the learning of less able or less confident pupils but they are less successful in helping more able pupils achieve high standards.

Overall arrangements for pupils' care guidance and support are satisfactory. The school is a welcoming place. Staff take good care of pupils. Pupils' personal development is good; they enjoy attending school, behave well, and develop good attitudes to learning. The trusting relationships pupils have with staff are the mainstay of their confidence in school. As one pupil said, 'The teachers help us even when we don't ask.' Pupils say they know that staff deal with any incidents of bullying appropriately. Most of the older pupils have a major sense of responsibility for younger pupils in the school community. The school council promotes improvements suggested by pupils. Links with the wider community, at home and abroad, involve pupils in extra educational activities that extend their opportunities significantly for personal development. Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has been strengthened by recent appointments and partnership with the local authority. The new strategic leadership team has a clear focus on raising standards and improving teaching and learning through the school. Although new systems yield much of the information needed to check pupils' performance, the allocation of key responsibilities for comprehensive analysis of these outcomes and links to teachers' plans is insufficiently clear. The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory. The staff team and governors are enthusiastic and determined to provide well for the pupils and the school shows a sound capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English and mathematics, especially for the more able pupils.
- Clarify the roles of senior managers and staff with responsibilities to plan and check pupils' progress to promote higher standards.
- Analyse data on pupils' progress with greater rigour, establishing clear links with teachers' lesson plans.
- Ensure planning for teaching basic skills is coherent across the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average. Results in the national tests in English, mathematics and science 2006 were significantly higher than previously. They are above average in mathematics and science, and broadly average in English. After a time when standards have been too low, the school is now consolidating recent gains. Improvements in teaching have raised pupils' achievement throughout the school. However, although overall progress is satisfactory, some higher attaining pupils do not make the progress they should. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well by skilled teaching assistants and consequently make good progress and achieve well. The small number of pupils learning English as an additional language benefit from the good opportunities for discussion in lessons and make good progress. There are no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are average, showing sound improvement since the last inspection.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' personal development and behaviour are good. They are friendly, polite, and keen to learn. They clearly enjoy school, joining in class discussions with enthusiasm, having fun with their friends in the well equipped playground, and showing pride in their achievements. They make good use of opportunities to take part in sport and activities in the community. Their understanding of how to be healthy and safe is good. They say they feel safe in school and have confidence in the school's arrangements for resolving any issues of bullying, harassment or any worries they may have.

Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. Well supported by work in lessons, which focus on social development, pupils also have responsibilities within school. They make increasing use of their growing skills of independence to enhance their work. The contact with schools and communities in other countries has successfully broadened the pupils' understanding of other cultures and ways of life. Their ability to work harmoniously together, together with their average skills in literacy, numeracy, and ICT, provides a good basis for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with some good features. Significant improvements have been made over the past two years to improve the quality of teaching. Examples of good teaching are evident in many lessons, with occasional examples of outstanding teaching. These lessons are well prepared and offer pupils lively, interesting and clearly focused learning. Teaching generally moves at a good pace and this is helping pupils to improve their rate of progress. Teaching for the more able pupils is not as successful because they are not always challenged well enough. The grouping arrangements of pupils for specialist and 'booster' teaching is too complex and staff find it difficult to make cohesive plans, particularly in literacy and numeracy. In turn, the approach is supported insufficiently by clear plans and assessments of what pupils need to do to improve. Good support from skilled teaching assistants helps lower attaining pupils, especially, and those who need most help with personal development to improve their learning. However, they are less successful in helping more able pupils attain high standards

Assessment systems are moving forward well, but links between the information gained and tailoring teaching plans to meet the specific needs of individual or groups of pupils are insecure. However, teachers' marking of pupils' work helps them to understand well their successes and points for development.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with some good features. The school provides well for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and they make good progress as a result. A broad range of visits, visitors and clubs before and after school give pupils of all abilities good opportunities to extend their understanding, engage in physical activities and develop leadership skills. Along with other resources for learning the provision for ICT, is used well to support pupils' learning. The school implements the curriculum using several different strategies including specialist teaching, setting of pupils into groups with similar levels of competence, class teaching and 'booster' groups that are mainly for older pupils. Although these arrangements have some success, they are too complex and supported insufficiently by accurate assessment information and planning for pupils' progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. The school is a welcoming place. The staff take good care of pupils' welfare and health, safety and required national safeguarding procedures are in place. Arrangements for supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are effective and they achieve well. The individual support

and guidance given to pupils of all abilities about their personal development and in day-to-day activities are also good. Improvements are underway in data analysis, marking and target setting for pupils to make sure staff and pupils are clear about what has to be done to improve pupils' progress. Early signs are positive, but these are not yet fully effective in providing the clear guidance needed by pupils to help them accelerate their progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Updated systems are enabling a better view of the pupils' performance and show that the underachievement of a significant minority of pupils is being resolved effectively. Although the staff team is clearly focused on raising standards, responsibility for checking pupils' progress through the school and taking appropriate action is not clearly defined. The school's satisfactory improvement plan is a compilation of proposed action but lacks clear means to check its successful implementation. This means that although a good start has been made, the planning process is less effective than it should be.

The governing body makes a sound contribution to the management of the school. Statutory duties are met and governors are suitably involved in monitoring and promoting the performance of the school. Taking the school's recent achievements into account, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory and it gives satisfactory value for money.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

The quality of provision

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

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

Bowburn Junior School

Surtees Avenue

Bowburn

Durham

County Durham

DH6 5DZ

15 February 2007

Dear Children

Thank you for making the inspectors feel so welcome during our recent visit to your school, for being so polite, answering all our questions and for telling us all about what happens at Bowburn and why you enjoy school.

We especially like these things about your school:

- how hard you and all the staff are working to make your school more successful
- how well-behaved most of you are in lessons and around the school
- how happy you seem to be and how confident you are that you can get any help you may need
- all the very interesting activities staff organise for you outside lesson time, in this country and abroad.

We have asked your headteacher, staff and governors to do these things to make your school even better:

- to check more precisely what you know and can do, to help you and the teachers to understand even better what you need to learn next
- to expect more of the more able children especially, but to continue helping everyone to do better in English and mathematics.

We wish every one of you well for the future and hope that you will always work hard and enjoy school and all the extra activities provided.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Penny Parrish

Lead inspector