



Bowerham Community Primary and Nursery School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119129
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 291331
Inspection dates 30 November –1 December 2006
Reporting inspector Arthur Allison

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Bowerham Road
School category	Community		Lancaster, Lancashire
Age range of pupils	3–11		LA1 4BS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01524 63999
Number on roll (school)	323	Fax number	01524 64672
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Andy Daykin
		Headteacher	Mr Tim Allan
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2001		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 30 November –1 December 2006	Inspection number 291331
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than most primary schools though the number of pupils on roll is falling. A nursery was opened in 2005. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and 16% have English as an additional language. However, the percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than in most schools. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is lower than the national average, but is rising. Attainment on entry is usually typical for children of this age but is sometimes below this. The school is emerging from a period of staffing difficulties beyond its control. The school provides before and after school care.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Bowerham is a satisfactory school with some good features. The vast majority of parents have every confidence in the school. One wrote, 'My children have been treated as individuals and their strengths and weaknesses have been catered for.' Several parents commented favourably on the new nursery provision.

Teaching is satisfactory and enables pupils to achieve average standards by the time they leave the school. There is some good teaching and, in these lessons, pupils make good progress but this good teaching is inconsistent throughout the school. Teachers do not always make the best use of assessment when planning lessons. As a result, some pupils capable of attaining higher standards are not sufficiently challenged. The curriculum is adequate and makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' enjoyment and achievement. This is because it meets all requirements and is enriched well by specialist teaching and through links with secondary schools, for example, in the teaching of French. The school provides a good level of pastoral care and support for all pupils. Nevertheless, the curricula for some subjects could be planned to make them more interesting.

In the Foundation Stage, children make satisfactory progress from their different starting points. Children who entered Reception in 2005 attained their expected goals in most areas of learning and some did better. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 to 6. Standards fluctuate in Key Stage 1, as shown in the national test results. In 2005, the test results were below average in Year 2 but broadly average in Year 6. Pupils did better in 2006 in Year 2 because their results were higher in reading and writing, though their writing is weaker than reading. Overall results in Year 6 were similar to those of 2005 but the English results improved whilst those in mathematics fell. The standards in mathematics are not as high as they should be because the work set for pupils does not match the needs of different abilities well enough.

Good provision for their personal development adequately prepares pupils for the next stage of their education and beyond, although their basic skills are only satisfactory. Pupils are polite and well behaved; they enjoy coming to school because they know that all staff want to help them to do well. They know how to stay safe. They are well aware of the need for a balanced diet and exercise for a healthy lifestyle. The provision for exercise is good. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and its wider community, notably through the school council, and in raising money for charities and for school funds. Older pupils confidently take on responsibilities as buddies and playground leaders, which promotes their personal development well.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school's self-evaluation is entirely accurate and the school is very clear about where key improvements are needed to enable the school to raise standards, particularly in writing. However, subject leaders currently take insufficient responsibility for improving the curriculum and teaching and learning in their subjects. The school makes good use of funding and support from initiatives such as Excellence in Cities; for example, through the appointment of a learning mentor whose help is appreciated by pupils. The school has made satisfactory

progress in tackling the issues from the previous inspection. Given the effectiveness of the headteacher, the school's accurate self-evaluation and the improvements beginning to be seen in standards, it is clear that the school has a good capacity to improve further. The school gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- raise standards in writing in Key Stage 1 and mathematics in Key Stage 2
- ensure that teachers use assessment consistently to plan work that presents sufficient challenge for all pupils
- ensure that the subject leaders take greater responsibility for improving the curriculum and the teaching of their subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils attain broadly average standards by the time they leave Year 6 and their achievement is satisfactory. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the small minority for whom English is not the language spoken at home, make satisfactory overall progress from their different starting points.

When children begin school, their attainment is typical for children of this age but it is sometimes below. Children make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage and are helped to settle into school well. Those who started Reception in 2005 achieved the standards expected for their age by the end of the Reception year and some children exceeded them.

The results of national tests fluctuate in Key Stage 1 but most pupils make satisfactory progress from their different starting points. The 2005 national test results of Year 2 pupils were below the national average. In the 2006 tests, Year 2 pupils did better. However, standards in writing, despite improvement, are lower than those in reading.

The Key Stage 2 results are broadly average, reflecting satisfactory progress. The Year 6 results in 2005 were broadly average overall, but fell in English and were well below average. Some girls in this particular Year 6 class did not make as much progress as boys, but this was unusual. The Year 6 English results improved well in 2006 but were lower in mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. All aspects of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Assemblies contribute well to their spiritual and moral development and the school celebrates cultural diversity. Pupils feel differences are valued in the school. They are adamant that there are no racist incidents in school. Behaviour is good and contributes to satisfactory achievement. The school council members are proud of their responsibilities, which include managing a budget. They speak confidently about improvements in behaviour and attribute this

to the work of the learning mentor. They describe her as having a 'magic look that transforms people'. Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in the satisfactory, but improving, attendance. Pupils are well informed about how to keep themselves safe and value the many opportunities provided for them to discuss problems or concerns. They understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and are successfully encouraged to keep fit and eat healthy foods. Pupils' development of the skills needed for their future economic well-being is satisfactory. They relate well to adults and their peers, but their basic skills in English and mathematics are only satisfactory. Pupils make a positive contribution to the school and wider communities, for example, older pupils act as buddies to younger pupils and pupils raise money for charities and for school funds.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Some good lessons were seen during the inspection throughout the school and this is the main reason why standards of writing are improving. In these lessons, the teachers have high expectations and motivate pupils to learn. Through their effective explanations and questioning, the teachers ensure that pupils know what it is they are required to learn and how the skills and knowledge gained will be built upon in future lessons. However, in some other lessons the pace is too slow and the teachers do not plan work that challenges all groups of children; this adversely affects their progress. Marking often shows pupils clearly how well they have achieved but is less effective in helping them to improve their work, although this is getting better. Teachers deploy their teaching assistants effectively to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory; it meets all requirements and makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal development. Basic skills in reading, writing, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) are consolidated and used satisfactorily to support learning in other subjects. The design of the curriculum could help to provide more interesting learning for the pupils but this is improving; for example, it is being enriched by visits to places of educational interest, visiting speakers and clubs. Pupils benefit considerably from a wide range of sports, arts and other activities. Physical education is enhanced by the use of specialist coaching and the strong links with local secondary schools. Performing arts make a good contribution to the quality of the curriculum, particularly in music. The enthusiastic and appreciative response to a group of visiting musicians during the inspection exemplified this well. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory

with some good features; for example, the fostering of ICT skills through the use of a digital camera.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Provision for the care, guidance and support of pupils is good. Staff know pupils and their families well. The learning mentor has made a valuable contribution to the development of relationships with parents and pupils, promoting attendance and good behaviour and increasing pupils' say in whole-school decision making. Procedures and practices for all aspects of child protection and health and safety are in place. Recent improvements to the accommodation have significantly improved the learning environment and safety of the buildings. Parents and pupils agree that the school is a secure and safe place to be. Arrangements for children starting the nursery are good and the school forges strong relationships with parents. As a result, children settle quickly into school routines. Pupils with learning difficulties and those for whom English is not the home language are well supported and effective communication between staff, parents and external agencies ensures these pupils make progress similar to that of other pupils. The headteacher has recently introduced new procedures to monitor and track pupils' progress. These procedures have been effective in identifying the learning needs of individual pupils and are beginning to make teachers' planning more consistent and challenging.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership and he has the support of the senior management team and other staff. He is very strongly committed to raising standards and is very perceptive about what needs to be done to achieve this whilst managing a school with a falling roll and staffing difficulties outside the school's control.

Through its self-evaluation, the school has an accurate view of how well it is doing and it has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Standards of writing are improving. Procedures for monitoring the pupils' progress and to set aspirational targets for the school and individual pupils have improved. The resources for ICT are better. Interactive whiteboards are used effectively to enhance learning and this view is shared by the pupils. There are strategies in place to raise standards by matching the work set for pupils more accurately to their abilities and to improve the effectiveness of subject leaders in the management of their areas of responsibility. These are beginning to lead to better progress, although they remain matters for improvement.

The views of parents and pupils are valued and acted on appropriately, such as parents' suggestions for teaching French. The governors, several of them recent appointments, fulfil their responsibilities satisfactorily and are becoming more confident about supporting and challenging the school's management.

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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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
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?	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	3

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?	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?	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?	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

Bowerham Community Primary and Nursery School

Bowerham Road

Lancaster

Lancashire

LA1 4BS

3 December 2006

Dear Children

We enjoyed our visit to your school. We enjoyed talking to you and were impressed by your friendliness, politeness and your confidence, especially when the school council were explaining what they liked about the school.

You are proud of your school and enjoy learning. We know that this is so because of your keenness to answer questions in lessons and your good behaviour. It was also clear to us that:

- you like to take on responsibilities, such as membership of your school council and being buddies
- you appreciate what your headteacher, teachers and other staff do to help you to make satisfactory progress
- you enjoy lessons, particularly when teachers use interactive whiteboards to make learning exciting and when you have visitors, such as the musicians who captivated and inspired you
- the school knows what needs to be done to help you to do better.

As a result of what we saw and what you said to us, we think that:

- standards could be higher still in your writing in Key Stage 1 and mathematics in Key Stage 2
- your lessons do not always challenge you enough.

Yours sincerely

Mr Allison, Mrs Fenwick and Mr Heap

The Inspection Team