

Burnley Barden Junior School Inspection report

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119260
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	291366
Inspection dates	1–2 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Gordon Alston

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Geoff Balson
Headteacher	Mr Simon Smalley
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2003
School address	Abel Street Burnley Lancashire BB10 1QB
Telephone number	01282 425438
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average-sized school serves mainly pupils who are of Asian heritage alongside a small number of White British pupils. Although very few are at an early stage of learning English, English is not the main language spoken in about 20 per cent of households. The area has distinct signs of social and economic disadvantage and numbers of pupils entitled to free school meals are well above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. In the last two years, the school has received a Healthy School's award and a Race Equality Charter. There are plans in place for the Junior and Infant schools to amalgamate in the near future.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's own evaluation that it provides a satisfactory education and satisfactory value for money. It sets high store in creating a supportive climate with strong community involvement to help pupils learn more effectively. As a result, the school has developed close, effective ties with a wide range of different agencies to raise pupils' self-esteem, self-control and basic skills. A measure of the success of this good pastoral work is the improvement in attendance, along with the good racial harmony and pupils' excellent behaviour. It is also highly evident in the way the pupils eat healthily, take exercise and actively seek help from peers and other adults. Pupils say they feel safe, secure and very happy in school. That said, although given the same endeavour, the school's academic provision is not yet as strong; improvements have been hampered by weaknesses in assessment leading to pockets of underachievement. Both issues are in the process of being resolved.

Pupils start school with below average standards and limited confidence in speaking and expressing their ideas. Achievement is satisfactory overall. Most pupils make satisfactory progress and standards by the end of Year 6 are below average. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at the early stage of learning English make the same progress as their peers, helped by the good support of teaching assistants. More able pupils underachieve at times when tasks they are given are not always challenging, particularly in writing. Standards were below average in mathematics but well below in English and in science in the 2006 national assessments for eleven year olds. However, weaknesses in attendance and in pupils' writing skills had a negative impact on results in 2006. The school has tackled poor attendance very well and has had some success in improving standards in writing. In both cases, this is leading to improvement overall and standards in English and science are now similar to those in mathematics.

Teaching is satisfactory. There are examples of good teaching where lessons are well structured with pupils set challenging work. In such lessons, pupils are highly motivated, think for themselves and make good progress. However, this does not happen often enough resulting in pupils making variable progress at times. Slower progress, particularly for higher attaining pupils is most evident when work is not matched accurately to their particular needs. The curriculum is satisfactory but with good opportunities for enriched experiences through clubs, activities outside the normal school day and visits. Pupils respond well to these activities which help to make learning real and active.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has built a positive team spirit amongst the staff to develop a caring learning environment where pupils feel valued and want to learn. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The school has an accurate view of its strengths and priorities for development and is beginning to make better use of this to help raise standards and improve achievement. However, there is a lack of rigour in checking on the impact of new initiatives. Consequently, the school has sound capacity to improve.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in English, mathematics and science, especially for more able pupils and particularly in writing.
- Improve teachers' use of assessment so that all lessons and tasks consistently challenge pupils to achieve their best.
- Strengthen the ways in which managers evaluate the impact of new initiatives that are aimed at improving school performance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Assessment information collated when pupils enter school indicates standards to be below average. Pupils' skills are weaker in English compared to mathematics because limited vocabulary restricts their ability to express their ideas confidently. Progress varies between year groups reflecting some inconsistency in teachers' expectations of pupils. The achievement and progress made by most pupils is satisfactory overall and standards are below average by the end of Year 6. Attainment in the 2006 national tests for eleven year-olds was below average in mathematics but well below in English and in science. Attendance was a particular issue for this year group and this, along with weaker writing standards had a negative impact on results that year. Attendance has improved rapidly in response to the implementation of good actions. Although the school has had some success in improving standards in writing, higher attaining pupils are still underachieving at times. Standards in English and science are improving and now match those in mathematics. The school is aware of the need to improve standards further and has put a number of initiatives in place, for example, better tracking of the progress pupils make and improved assessment procedures. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities along with those at the early stage of learning English achieve as well as others because they receive good support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are exceptionally well-behaved, very welcoming to visitors and like school enormously. They enjoy learning and are keen to develop new skills. They take part in all that the school provides. This is reflected in improved attendance, which is now average. The school council makes a positive contribution to the school's work, suggesting ideas for improvement, which are then acted upon; for example, in enhancing playground equipment. Bullying or harassment is rare but, when incidents do occur, pupils say they are dealt with swiftly. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a very good sense of what is right and wrong and relate well to each other and to adults. Pupils contribute well to the wider community, such as through their support of various charities. They have a good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy and take advantage of the opportunities for sport and exercise provided for them. They develop self-esteem and increased confidence because they see their efforts and achievements being valued and rewarded; for example, through receiving special certificates and assemblies.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Throughout the school, typical features in lessons include good relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils try hard and feel that they can readily turn to teachers for help. Teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge. Lesson planning is based on subject guidance and objectives are always shared with pupils, ensuring that they understand what they are to learn. Teaching assistants provide good support and help clarify questions and support discussions. In the best lessons, learning is exciting with teachers making tasks interesting and challenging; allowing pupils to use their initiative. Pupils respond well to this and are keen to succeed. However, the pace of teaching varies and teachers do not always use assessment information well enough to provide work that consistently promotes high achievement. As a result, tasks are too easy at times, especially for more able pupils. Teachers do not always involve pupils actively enough during the start of lessons, missing opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their spoken language.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets the needs of pupils. It contributes successfully in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils learn to value each other's strengths and ideas, work together and celebrate diversity. This gives good support for those who have extra learning needs or are at an early stage of learning English. Pupils are set in ability groups for English and mathematics. While this allows work to be better focused on the needs of different groups of pupils, opportunities for them to apply their learning in English and mathematics through other subjects they are taught in their own classes is inconsistent. A programme of enhancing pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) and speaking skills across subjects is developing satisfactorily. There are good links with other organisations for pupils to participate in a range of activities; for example, sport, computers and gardening. Personal, social and health education is developing well and is beginning to ensure that pupils have access to good quality information related to healthy living and how to keep safe.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

This aspect is satisfactory with good features. Pupils say that they feel very safe and secure in school and know there is always someone to help them with worries. This is because there is a very caring ethos, safe environment and good relationships. Systems to monitor pupils' academic progress have recently been introduced and are helping teachers identify where extra support or challenge is needed.

However, the quality of day-to-day target-setting varies and does not always involve pupils fully in assessing and improving their own work. Good support is provided by behaviour support workers and learning mentors to build self esteem and to support high standards of behaviour. Attendance is monitored well and a good series of actions have been implemented including a 'Walking Bus', providing alarm clocks for pupils and also sporting activities before the school day begins. This has successfully improved attendance, which is now at a satisfactory level.

Child protection and all other risk assessments are secure. Pupils with extra needs are well supported by staff and outside agencies. This ensures that they achieve as well as other pupils. Transition to and from other schools is good because liaison with outside agencies and other schools is well organised.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has worked well to create a school that provides good pastoral support for pupils and a place where they feel safe, happy and valued. Poor attendance has been tackled effectively and the headteacher and senior staff have worked successfully to improve punctuality and strengthen good links with the community and other schools, particularly the infant school. This has helped strengthen assessment and improve transition. A positive team spirit has been established amongst the staff who strongly support the focus on raising pupils' achievement. Monitoring key aspects of the school's work has been carried out and overall weaknesses have been correctly identified. Although this has led to some significant gains, for example, in improving attendance and in tackling weaknesses in writing, managers' skills in evaluating the impact of new initiatives are not strong enough. The effective tracking of pupil progress and teachers' use of assessment has not been good enough to ensure that pupils are consistently given appropriately challenging work so that they always achieve well. A new system is being implemented and the school has begun to strengthen assessment procedures. The school has a sound capacity to improve. The governing body is supportive of the school and holds it to account for its performance. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

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Annex A

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 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	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	1
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?	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.

Annex A

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

3 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Burnley Barden Junior School, Burnley, BB10 1QB

I am writing this letter after thinking about the two enjoyable days we spent in your school. We came to see how good your school is. Your friendliness, excellent behaviour and the way you get on with one another are a credit to you all. These qualities helped us to judge just how good your school is in helping you to grow and learn.

We found that your school is a satisfactory school. I always ask pupils their views of the school and one girl replied, 'Everyone is happy here and teachers really care'. She was right; your school is a happy, caring school. You have a good team of adults with everyone wanting you to do as well as you can and be happy, safe and healthy. Your teachers try to make learning interesting and arrange lots of visits for you to go on and visitors to talk to you. I was pleased to see how hard you work, but equally important is how well everyone gets on. I saw lots of pupils who have responsibilities and jobs to do, and who do them well.

Everyone wants your school to become a good school and we have suggested that your teachers concentrate on a number of things, which we think, will help you make better progress. We think you could be reaching higher standards in English, particularly in writing, mathematics and science by the time you leave the school. In order to achieve this, I have asked your teachers to really push you hard with your work, especially more able pupils, and to make sure that the work they give you really does make you think and make faster progress in lessons. I know some of you found the work a little easy at times and did not feel challenged. You can also help by telling your teachers if work is too easy.

I wish you well and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Gordon Alston

Lead inspector