

Button Lane Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131938
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	293895
Inspection dates	20–21 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Philip Jarrett HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	323
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Bown
Headteacher	Mrs Michelle Joyce
Date of previous school inspection	23 September 2002
School address	Button Lane Northern Moor Manchester Lancashire M23 0ND
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Button Lane Primary School is a larger than average school on the southern edge of Manchester. It serves an area of considerable social deprivation and over half the pupils are eligible to receive free school meals. Most pupils are of White British heritage, although there are a small number of pupils who have English as an additional language, including several refugees and asylum seekers. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Attainment levels on entry to the nursery are below average. At the time of the inspection, a seconded headteacher was in charge of the school; she is to become the permanent headteacher from April 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Button Lane Primary School has had a difficult and turbulent recent history. This includes five different headteachers, mostly temporary, in the past 18 months and a lack of stability in other senior posts. In September 2006, a seconded acting headteacher, was appointed to work alongside the existing headteacher, following her return to work. The existing headteacher subsequently resigned, as did the chair and vice-chair of governors. The acting headteacher has continued to work in the school and has now been appointed as permanent headteacher from the beginning of the summer term 2007.

This significant lack of continuity has had a negative impact on the school. Test results were especially poor in 2006 across all key subjects and attendance declined. However, the improvement in the school since last September has been exceptional. Parents speak of the 'dramatic improvement' and argue that the school is now 'going from strength to strength'. This inspection confirms that they are right. Overall, the school is currently providing a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils.

So, what has brought about such a significant improvement in such a short space of time? Outstanding leadership by the acting headteacher, fully supported by other members of staff and the new governing body, has successfully created a strong determination to improve and a real sense of teamwork involving the whole-school community. The school has rigorously evaluated its current provision and set ambitious targets for improvement. The acting headteacher is under no illusions that much remains to be done. Standards are too low and test results confirm that pupils have achieved poorly in the past. However, there is already clear evidence that recent changes are contributing to significant improvements. For instance, provision for the youngest children in the Foundation Stage is now good and this ensures that pupils make a good start to their schooling. Behaviour has improved and the school's strong focus on learning leads to good relationships and positive attitudes to learning.

The school believes that teaching has improved and this was also confirmed by the inspection. The best teaching is of a high quality. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement since some of the strategies employed in lessons are less effective at engaging pupils' interest, particularly in the foundation subjects. In addition, pupils are not clear enough about how to improve their work.

Everyone connected with the school argues that it is currently doing well. They talk about 'the green shoots of recovery' and 'a corner having been turned'. The inspection team agrees that this is the case. Much has been achieved in a very short period, expectations are high and the schools' capacity to improve is excellent.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards for all pupils.
- Improve pace, challenge and variety in lessons, especially in the foundation subjects.
- Extend pupils' understanding of how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Attainment on entry to the Nursery is below average overall and well below average in aspects of literacy and mathematics. Effective provision ensures that pupils make good progress

especially in areas such as personal, social and emotional development and physical development. However, literacy and mathematics remain below average on entry to Year 1.

Test results confirm that attainment has been consistently below average in English, mathematics and science by the time pupils leave the school. Despite this, standards rose in all three subjects over the period from 2003–05. However, the 2006 results were very poor. Evidence also confirms that pupils have made too little progress as they move through the school. The school acknowledges this.

The significant improvements to the school, described above, are too recent to be reflected in national test results. However, there is already considerable evidence of better achievement by pupils. Lesson observations during the inspection rated pupils' progress as good in around half the lessons observed. The school's own data, based on systematic termly assessments, show that rates of progress have increased significantly this year. Finally, the school's monitoring of progress against challenging end of Key Stage 2 targets suggests that results are likely to be considerably better in 2007 than 2006. This means that achievement is currently satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and have a positive attitude to learning. Attendance is below average but has improved as a result of effective action taken by the school. Behaviour is good especially in lessons and around school.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall but with some good features. For instance, the school has worked hard to combat what it sees as insular attitudes from some pupils and has taken steps to improve their understanding of other cultures. An email link with a school in Zambia is a good example of this work. Social development is good. Relationships are mostly positive and there is little evidence of bullying. Pupils gain confidence in an atmosphere of trust and respect, learning to articulate their personal feelings and concerns.

The school is a safe and secure environment. Pupils know how to keep safe and adopt healthy lifestyles. They are able to talk about their choice of healthier options at lunchtimes and about the importance of taking part in a range of physical activities. This is reflected in the school council's involvement in the recent decision to provide more opportunities for outdoor play at break times.

The school has sought to give pupils more say in decision-making. The school council provides pupils with the opportunity to contribute positively to the life of the school; this has increased pupils' confidence and their understanding of the democratic process. Pupils have also been involved in the school's current review of provision, for instance giving feedback about their English lessons. They have also been involved in contributing to local and national charities. However, opportunities to develop their sense of belonging to the wider community are limited at present. Standards of basic skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) are low and this means that pupils are not in a good position to develop the skills needed for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Recent training and monitoring have encouraged teachers to evaluate their work more carefully and they are now very clear about what makes teaching effective. The school's own evidence, involving joint work with the local authority, suggests that teaching has improved. The inspection broadly confirmed this; around half the lessons observed during the inspection were good.

Teachers form good relationships with pupils and mostly manage learning well. The best teaching observed involved a range of strategies that fully engaged and motivated pupils. Pupils spoke approvingly of teachers 'who made learning fun'. In the more effective lessons, teachers were very sensitive to the needs of particular pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and used good strategies to manage potentially difficult pupils. Lessons that were not as effective tended to be rather dull. There was a lack of variety, leading to a slow pace, and pupils were given a passive role in their own learning. The work scrutiny confirmed that this approach tended to be more common in the foundation subjects. Too much of the writing remains low level with too few opportunities for extended work.

The school is seeking to develop its assessment procedures. At present, pupils do not have a clear enough understanding about how to improve their work. Their work is marked conscientiously and a few teachers give detailed feedback. The school has also introduced a whole-school approach to learning targets for classes and groups of pupils. However, these measures have not yet had a significant impact on pupils' knowledge of strengths and weaknesses.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall and good in the Foundation Stage. The Foundation Stage curriculum is well organised, both inside and outdoors. The learning environment has been improved to provide a strong focus on learning through play but with a good emphasis on aspects such as phonics and ICT.

For older pupils, the school has rightly placed the development of English and mathematics as central to its quest to raise standards. This means that opportunities in other subjects are more limited and planning is not always so purposeful. The school acknowledges that the curriculum does not yet provide sufficient challenge for more able pupils. It is planning to review how the curriculum is delivered in order to make more meaningful links across subjects and to enhance creativity. Provision for ICT has improved since the last inspection.

A good programme of personal, social and health education emphasises a safe and healthy lifestyle; this has had a positive impact on pupils' personal development. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support to access the curriculum.

There are some innovative aspects to the curriculum such as the World Book day, a recycling week and a multicultural week. In addition, the curriculum is enhanced by a range of visits, visitors and clubs but at present this is not a strong feature of school provision.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The overall quality of care, guidance and support is good. Teachers and their assistants are sensitive to pupils' feelings and take particular care to include all pupils in every aspect of school life. Pupils generally say they feel safe and know who to turn to if they are worried. Pupils are well cared for. Good relationships promote pupils' confidence, self-esteem and sense of security.

All required procedures to safeguard pupils are in place and are reviewed on a regular basis. The school supports vulnerable pupils and those with additional needs very effectively. Teachers are aware of individual pupils' needs and the management of support from outside agencies is very good. Parents are increasingly well involved in learning about their children's progress and how they can help.

Procedures to track pupils' progress against their targets are now very thorough and systematic. Formal assessments are regular and monitored carefully to ensure their accuracy. This enables the school to identify pupils who are making slow progress. The process is detailed and supported by a range of intervention strategies, especially in literacy. However, pupils are not yet able to review their own learning effectively or to identify specific areas for development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

This report has already referred to some of the features that have caused recent turbulence. These events clearly had a negative impact on the school's provision, leading to very poor 2006 test results. The situation has been transformed by the outstanding leadership of the acting headteacher. All members of the school community - teachers, parents, pupils and governors - testify to the dramatic impact she has had on the school in a short period.

The headteacher is very enthusiastic, highly committed and has become a strong and visible presence around the school. She has given the school a clear sense of direction and helped to improve staff motivation. All members of staff are working together effectively and with confidence. The school has received good support from the local authority over this period. The school also benefits from a number of effective middle leaders who are working closely with the headteacher.

The school now monitors every aspect of its work systematically. Provision has been reviewed, making use of a wide range of evidence including the views of pupils. Self-evaluation is honest and secure. The school acknowledges that standards should be higher and is determined to ensure that this happens. The school improvement plan makes use of a wide range of evidence to set an ambitious agenda for development.

Parents are much better involved in the life of the school. They are kept up-to-date with developments through the weekly newsletter and have been given opportunities to contribute to current initiatives. The new governing body fully supports the work of the headteacher. They are well informed about the progress of the school and are prepared to question its effectiveness. In recent times, they have been preoccupied with staffing issues. The governing body now has a good understanding of the challenges facing the school and is working closely

with the staff to bring about the necessary improvements. The next steps will see them more directly involved in monitoring and evaluation and in taking a strategic role in developments.

For the reasons outlined above, the school's capacity to improve is now excellent. This reflects the significant improvements made by the school following the arrival of the acting headteacher last year. Staff, pupils, parents and the governing body are working closely together and with a genuine commitment to improvement. Much has been achieved in a short period; all this gives the inspection team confidence about the long term progress of the school.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
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	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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.

Annex A

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	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

Inspection of Button Lane Primary School, Manchester, M23 0EE

Thank you very much for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently with two colleagues. We enjoyed talking to you. Most pupils were very friendly and well behaved. You told us that you feel safe in school and that the staff care for you well.

We think that your school gives you a satisfactory education overall and that it is getting better. You probably know that there have been lots of changes to the school over the past year or so and these have caused a number of problems. As a result, last year's test results for the Year 6 pupils were poor. The school agrees that pupils are capable of achieving better. From what we saw on the inspection, you are now making satisfactory progress.

The big change this year is that Mrs Joyce joined the school as an acting headteacher and has now been appointed permanent headteacher. Many of you told us what a difference she has made. We think that she is doing a really good job, supported by the teachers and the new governing body. Parents also told us that they had confidence in the school and were pleased by many of the recent changes. As a result, we think that the future's bright for Button Lane Primary School and that it will continue to improve.

However, we have told the headteacher, staff and governors that standards need to be higher. They agree with us. One of the ways that they can do this is to try to provide lots of lessons which are varied, interesting and challenging. You told us that you liked teachers who made learning fun. One final thing we noticed is that pupils are not very sure about how to improve their work and we have asked the teachers to think about this with you.

Thank you again for being so polite and helpful.