

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045  
F 020 7421 6855  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Mrs Allen  
Headteacher  
Burnley Heasandford Primary School  
Williams Road  
Burnley  
Lancashire  
BB10 3DA

Dear Mrs Allen

Ofsted survey inspection programme - English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 20 February 2007 to inspect work in English.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject the visit had a particular focus on our current survey theme: provision for poetry. The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, review of pupils' work and observation of three lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be satisfactory, although some aspects are better than that.

Achievement and standards

Achievement in English is satisfactory although standards remain below average.

- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have been consistently well below average over recent years.
- Data provided during the inspection confirmed that attainment on entry to the school is also well below average.
- The progress made by pupils, according to contextual value added measures, is below average. However, the situation is complicated by factors including higher than average mobility. The school's data shows that pupils who join the school at times other than the expected starting point do less well than those pupils who join in the reception class. This evidence also shows that the school is receiving an increasing

proportion of pupils who need support with English as an additional language (EAL).

- Taking into account low standards on entry, high levels of deprivation and significant need for EAL support, the achievement of pupils overall is satisfactory. This judgement was confirmed by evidence of reasonable progress within the lessons observed.
- The school has successfully created a positive ethos for learning. On the evidence of this inspection, pupils are very well behaved and keen to do well.
- The school acknowledges that boys, and some more able pupils, do not achieve as well as they should.

### Quality of teaching and learning in English

The quality of teaching and learning in English is satisfactory.

- This judgement is based on a range of evidence including levels of achievement over recent years, lessons observed during the inspection and work sampling.
- Teachers work hard to improve pupils' achievement. Progress is constrained by some pupils' lack of independent learning skills and weak understanding of English.
- Teaching observed during the inspection was broadly satisfactory, with some good features. Lessons were marked by good relationships and thorough planning. Teachers managed learning well and succeeded in engaging pupils' interest. Classroom assistants were well deployed to support groups of pupils.
- Some pupils struggled to make progress in lessons when not supported by an adult.
- In discussion, pupils were very uncertain about how to improve their work in English. This is despite a systematic approach to whole school targets in literacy which are differentiated according to age and ability. However, pupils do not appear to apply these targets directly to their own work on a day-to-day basis. The best marking is detailed and good quality. However, some marking gives pupils too little feedback on how to improve their work.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work suggests that some pupils in Key Stage 2 are given too few opportunities to complete extended writing.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in English is good.

- The school has rigorously reviewed its curriculum in recent years in order to provide a curriculum that better matches pupils' needs.
- This revised curriculum has a number of positive features in relation to English. Firstly, good links are made with other subjects. This means that pupils are more likely, for instance, to write about topics that

engage them and about which they have some knowledge. The school is also seeking to provide interesting experiences to stimulate pupils' work in literacy.

- The school also makes good use of speaking, listening and drama to motivate pupils. Writers have been invited into school to work with pupils and visits, for instance to see the Shakespeare for Kids group, have had a positive impact on pupils' motivation. As a result of these changes, the current curriculum for pupils appears to be effective in stimulating their work in English.

## Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management in English are good.

- The school's leadership has been involved in reviewing the curriculum for English and providing a new sense of direction. The school's leaders have a good understanding of provision in English. Data are well used to identify strengths and weaknesses. They are aware that standards need to be higher and have implemented a range of appropriate strategies to bring this about. Despite this evidence of good work, standards remain low, partly affected by complex contextual and mobility factors.
- The school monitors and evaluates provision for English well. A systematic programme of formal and informal lesson observations has been introduced and this provides regular feedback to teachers. However, the form used does not give enough emphasis to evaluating the outcomes of teaching. The school also monitors pupils' work effectively and has used this to identify strengths and weaknesses in provision and marking.
- Thoughtful consideration has been given to a range of other issues including reducing the bureaucratic demands on teachers' planning and simplifying the emphasis on selected learning objectives.
- The leadership team works closely and well together. They have analysed data from tests well to identify suitable areas for improvement in reading and writing although the plans currently lack success criteria linked to pupil's achievement.
- The school works closely with the local authority in developing English and has put a lot of time and effort into training teachers in aspects of the subject.

## Provision for poetry

Provision for poetry is good

- Pupils like poems and speak enthusiastically about poetry lessons.

- Poetry is securely built into units of work, following guidance from the Primary National Strategy. This means that pupils study a good range of poems as they move through the school.
- Poetry is promoted through visits by poets to school, sharing poems in assemblies, and displaying and publishing pupils' poems.
- Pupils are given good opportunities to write their own poems although teachers' marking shows an uncertainty about how to respond.

## Inclusion

Inclusion in English is satisfactory.

- Inclusion should be considered satisfactory, in line with overall rates of pupils' progress.
- The school recognises that certain groups of pupils, notably boys, should achieve better in English.
- The school's ethos is very inclusive and provides a positive and welcoming environment in which to work.
- The school tracks the progress of all pupils carefully and offers a wide range of intervention programmes to support their particular needs.
- Good support was provided for pupils with learning and language difficulties in the lessons observed.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving the feedback given to pupils through marking and learning targets
- raising expectations about extended writing throughout the school
- focusing more directly on outcomes for pupils in lessons and subject planning.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop English in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority/Local Learning Skills Council. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term and made available to the team for the next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Philip Jarrett HMI  
Subject Adviser for English