

# Chowbent Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106443
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wigan
<b>Inspection number</b>	309128
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30–31 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Colin Smith

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	187
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Julie Higson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sharon Sanderson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2004
<b>School address</b>	Laburnum Street Atherton Manchester Lancashire M46 9FP
<b>Telephone number</b>	01942 883410
<b>Fax number</b>	01942 897773

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is slightly smaller than average in size. It serves a mixed community but one leaning towards disadvantaged rather than privileged. The proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals and with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are broadly average. The vast majority of pupils have a White British heritage. A very small number are Indian, Asian, Caribbean or from other backgrounds. None of these pupils are at an early stage of learning English. An independently organised childcare club operates on the school site. The headteacher was appointed in September 2006.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The arrival of the headteacher in 2006 marked a significant turning point in the school's development. Prior to that, standards had fallen to very low levels. Very good leadership has reversed the decline. Standards are now rising and the school is improving at a good rate. As a consequence, the school's effectiveness and the value for money provided are now satisfactory. Parents wholeheartedly approve of the changes. Pupils, themselves are aware of the transformation commenting that, 'The school is now colourful, not black and white as it used to be.'

The school's strengths lie in the good levels of care, guidance and support provided. Pupils are safeguarded and well supported; vulnerable pupils are being helped to overcome their difficulties. Pupils' planning booklets have been a revelation in guiding them towards their targets and involving their parents. These factors are at the heart of pupils' good personal development; improved behaviour and enjoyment of school; and awareness of safe and healthy lifestyles.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving; particularly the way teachers are trying to cater for pupils' different needs. The increasingly good contribution made by classroom assistants is helping pupils in need of learning support to reach their targets. However, the challenge for the more able pupils is still lacking in some instances, particularly in science. Teaching of the whole class is often good but not enough is expected of pupils' capacity to produce good quality work in their books.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Children enter school with attainment below that expected for their age and are currently attaining standards that are below average overall by the end of Year 6. Standards in mathematics and writing are average. Standards in reading, though improving markedly, are still too low. Although most pupils reach the levels expected in science, standards are too low because very few of the more able pupils reach the higher levels of which they are capable. This is largely because investigation skills are not taught systematically.

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The headteacher provides a shining example of how to teach effectively and manage change. Other leaders are emerging and taking more responsibility, but are not yet fully used to their roles. In taking the school forward, the headteacher has initiated a root and branch assessment of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The accuracy of this self-evaluation is reflected in the inspection findings, which confirm the headteacher's judgements in almost every aspect of the school's work. Standards are now higher than at the time of the previous inspection in English and mathematics. This indicates the school's good capacity for further improvement.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Many children enter school with good social skills. However, their understanding of words, letters and numbers is largely below that expected for their age. During their time in Reception, children make satisfactory progress. Although, by the end of the year, most are working within the learning goals expected for their age, fewer children exceed them than is the case nationally. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Planning, organisation and structure have all been improved and children's progress is carefully observed, recorded and built upon. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is a good balance between the direct teaching of literacy

and numeracy skills and opportunities for children to explore and learn for themselves. When working in small groups, children behave and concentrate well. When new experiences are introduced, they become engrossed, for example when experimenting with coloured inks on blotting paper. However, some activities are repetitive, lack challenge or refreshment and children's enthusiasm wanes. Spoken language is not always developed sufficiently, for example, when the whole class are not fully engaged in sharing a big reading book or when children are not asked searching questions to encourage them to explain what they are learning.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve standards in reading.
- Improve the achievement of the more able pupils and all pupils' investigation skills, to raise standards in science.
- Raise teachers' expectations of pupils' capacity to present well organised, careful and accurate work, to increase their learning.

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.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Infant pupils achieve well in mathematics to reach average standards. They achieve satisfactorily in writing, although standards are still below average by the end of Year 2. From Years 3 to 6, pupils' achievement in mathematics is satisfactory and good in many aspects of writing. The result of raising standards in reading is evident in younger pupils' increasing proficiency in building words and older pupils' improving comprehension skills. However, enjoyment of reading is not widespread and some pupils still do not read enough at home. Standards in reading, though improving, are still below average across the school. Standards in science are well below average and pupils' skills of investigation are particularly weak. Standards as a whole have improved over the last two years, largely fuelled by setting more challenging but achievable targets. There are no significant differences in the achievement of boys, girls, or amongst pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Pupils who receive additional support with learning have made satisfactory progress in the past but this is now increasing substantially.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are eager learners who work well independently and together. They understand the importance of rules and show respect for the beliefs and feelings of others. Pupils behave well in lessons and break times. They say they enjoy school much more because lessons are more interesting. This is reflected in attendance, which is broadly average and improving. In learning how to keep fit, eat healthily and avoid dangers, pupils have acquired a good grasp of safe and healthy lifestyles. They relish making decisions and taking responsibility. Despite weaknesses in reading, most pupils have adequate writing and numeracy skills. They also participate in mini-enterprise schemes to experience the world of work. These factors help to ensure sound future economic well-being.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

The attention given to improving teaching is paying dividends. Teaching is now at least satisfactory and half is good. Pupils are well managed. Lessons are calm and purposeful. All teachers ensure that pupils know what is expected of them. New ideas are clearly explained, discussed in pairs and often brought to life on large computer screens. Such approaches raise pupils' enthusiasm and improve their understanding. The use of assessment to measure pupils' learning is satisfactory. In the best lessons, the work provided is matched precisely to pupils' different learning needs and they all learn successfully. However, there are still occasions when the more able pupils are not challenged sufficiently, particularly in science. Teaching assistants are making a real difference to pupils requiring additional support. Although the whole-class teaching part of the lesson is largely successful, teachers do not have equally high expectations of pupils' capacity to produce accurate, well organised and well presented work.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

Pupils appreciate the curriculum changes being made and enjoy the 'fun' elements in lessons, such as drama, information and communication technology slide shows and educational visits. Most noticeably, the curriculum is being sensitively adapted to meet the needs of pupils who require learning support. The school is now turning its attention to the needs of the able, gifted and talented pupils, although the activities provided are still not sufficient, for example to improve their reading and investigation skills in science. The effective health education programme and wide range of after-school activities are instrumental in developing pupils' interests, talents and understanding of healthy lifestyles.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

The school provides a high level of care and good support. Pupils' safety is paramount, supervision is good and risks are minimised. When concerns arise regarding pupils' welfare or learning, parents and health professionals join with the school in removing barriers to learning. Although the marking of pupils' work does not always provide pointers for improvement, good levels of guidance are provided in other ways. Pupils' progress is carefully tracked and when it falters additional support swiftly follows. Excellent planners for pupils have been introduced, which contain improvement targets and provide the dialogue with parents. This means that pupils know what they need to do to improve. However, these recent measures have not yet had time to influence standards.

## Leadership and management

#### Grade: 3

Parents, pupils, staff and governors widely recognise that the headteacher's vision, energy, enthusiasm and exemplary teaching are transforming the school. A team of committed staff determined to secure further improvement is emerging. Rigour has been injected into checking the work of the school. Lessons are regularly observed. Teachers' planning is carefully checked

to ensure consistency of approach. In-depth analyses are made of pupils' progress. The information gathered is used well to identify clear priorities, precise actions and set ambitious targets for pupils and teachers. Governors provide good support and are helping to hold the school to account. Senior staff and subject leaders are learning how to lead and manage by operating in working parties. As yet, they are not in a position to take full control of their areas of responsibility but they are gaining valuable insights into how to raise standards. Their contribution is satisfactory but not yet sufficient, for example, to improve the quality of work in pupils' books. This is why the quality of leadership and management overall is satisfactory rather than good, as the school judged it to be.

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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	2
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 Chowbent Primary School, Manchester, M46 9FP

Thank you for making me so welcome and answering my questions so politely. I thoroughly enjoyed my visit. After two days inspecting your school, I would like to explain my findings.

I know that standards in the school slipped two to three years ago. Since then, with the help of your headteacher and her staff, your school has improved a lot. Your school is satisfactory at the moment but I can see how much it is improving. Teaching is at least satisfactory and improving, and you are making at least satisfactory progress. Standards in mathematics and writing have been rising well.

There are many good things about your school. The way children with learning difficulties are helped and supported is particularly good. Your behaviour is good and you are eager to learn. I noticed how much you enjoy school, especially all of those extra activities. You know how to keep healthy and stay safe. Your school is very caring. Teachers and support staff go out of their way to make sure that you are content and happy. It's good to see that you follow their example by helping each other.

I want to help your school to carry on improving and have three suggestions that will help.

- Standards in writing have been rising, so I have asked your teachers to work hard on your reading. You can help by reading more at home.
- Most of you reach the levels expected in science, but not all of the more able ones amongst you reach the higher levels. I have asked your teachers to work on your investigation skills.
- You listen carefully and work hard in lessons, but the work in some of your books could be better. I believe that if teachers expect more of you, you will produce more careful and accurate work. You can help by trying your very best.