

Burnley Lowerhouse Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119215
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313222
Inspection dates	8–9 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Kathryn Dodd

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	186
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Johnson
Headteacher	Mr Dominic Conti
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2004
School address	Liverpool Road Burnley Lancashire BB12 6LN
Telephone number	01282 426774
Fax number	01282 839980

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Almost all the pupils at this average sized school are from White British backgrounds. The school serves a mixed community that includes an area of considerable social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school holds the Healthy School, Eco-School and Investors in People accreditations.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school, with good features, providing satisfactory value for money. It is a happy, friendly and welcoming school that has improved soundly since the previous inspection. The good level of pastoral care for pupils is seen in the way that staff nurture them and provide a happy, safe and secure place for them to learn. Pupils' personal development is good. They behave well, have good attitudes to their learning, and talk knowledgeably about what they have to do to keep healthy and safe. Pupils make a strong contribution to the school and to the local community. They are soundly prepared to become responsible citizens of the future. Parents are pleased with the quality of education their children receive. They particularly appreciate all that the school does to ensure that their children enjoy school, especially being able to take part in the good range of extra-curricular activities on offer.

All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress. Standards by Year 6 are broadly average. In recent years, standards in reading have been improving steadily because of good support programmes to boost pupils' learning, and several initiatives to enthuse pupils, for example, by developing the school library. Standards in science are average. Standards in writing and mathematics are below average. This is because the more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged and do not make enough progress. The quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum are satisfactory, and from their assessments teachers know what pupils can already do. Teachers do not always use this information effectively to check on pupils' progress and to identify and support pupils who are not making enough progress.

The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. Ensuring that pupils make good progress in their personal development within a caring and good quality environment is high on the headteacher's agenda. He drives forward improvements successfully, for example forging strong partnerships within the local community in order to further pupils' enjoyment of school and to enrich their learning. The Healthy School and Eco-School awards reflect the importance given to developing pupils' personal and social skills. The deputy headteacher provides very good support and, together with the headteacher, is increasingly raising expectations of what pupils can achieve academically. Subject leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas to develop, and are beginning to develop their roles and management skills to bring about change. The school's capacity to improve in the future is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate pupils' progress in writing and mathematics in order to raise standards.
- Improve the planning of work to meet pupils' differing learning needs, especially for the more able.
- Keep a closer check on pupils' progress and provide the necessary support when the need arises.
- Develop the skills of subject leaders and governors, so that the responsibility for school improvement is shared more equitably.

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

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Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average by Year 6. When pupils transfer to the school, their attainment, although variable from year to year, is broadly average. As a result of a whole school focus, standards in reading have been improving steadily in recent years and are now broadly average. Pupils also reach the level expected for their age in science. Standards are not as high in writing and mathematics. Nevertheless, most pupils make satisfactory progress and reach their learning targets. However, the progress of more able pupils is sometimes too slow because teachers' expectations of them are not high enough, particularly in mathematics and in writing. The low results of the 2007 national tests for pupils in Year 6 reflect the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the low attainment of pupils who joined the school partway through this phase of their education. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have the extra help in lessons that enables them to progress at the same rate as other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. The school works hard to improve on the average attendance figures. Pupils say that they feel happy and safe at school. They are polite, courteous and respectful towards others. Behaviour is good because pupils clearly understand the consequences of their conduct and actions. They are proud of their achievements and value rewards, such as the fantastic book awards. Pupils show their growing maturity and confidence by helping with duties around school. Their good awareness of issues relevant to the local community reflects the school's efforts to foster links, for example with a local Member of Parliament. Pupils know why it is important to keep themselves fit and eat sensibly, and how to stay safe. Their growing personal and social skills, along with satisfactory progress in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills, prepare them soundly for secondary school and for becoming responsible young adults.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils make satisfactory progress as a result of satisfactory teaching and learning. Good organisation, purposeful activities, positive relationships, and caring support for pupils who

need extra help are strong features of most lessons. As a result, pupils are attentive and behave well. Many teachers are keen to try out their growing ability to use interactive whiteboards, and this is providing an additional incentive for pupils to listen and show interest. The pace at which pupils learn varies, however, because teachers' expectations of them, both in lessons and over time, are not always sufficiently high to push their learning forward at a good rate. Teachers regularly assess pupils to find out what they can already do, and to identify pupils whose learning needs an extra boost to enable them to catch up. However, on a day-to-day basis this assessment information is not always used effectively enough to plan new work. As a result, tasks are not always set at the correct level. Because of this some pupils' progress is too slow, especially that of the more able pupils in writing and mathematics.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. A good range of extra-curricular activities, especially sporting activities, such as Tae Kwon Do, make a strong contribution to pupils' enjoyment of school and to their personal development. The new library and other initiatives have motivated pupils to enjoy reading more often. As a result of this increased enthusiasm, standards are continuing to improve. In writing, however, pupils do not always have enough opportunities to practise their skills across the curriculum. In history and religious education, for example, completing worksheets sometimes limits opportunities for writing creatively and at length. The school has started to present new challenges to gifted and talented pupils, particularly as a result of productive partnerships with other schools and the community. These challenges, however, are not always included as an integral part of opportunities in day-to-day lessons. Very recent adaptations to the curriculum for mathematics are showing early signs of helping to raise standards.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Staff know their pupils well and ensure a high quality of care for them. Appropriate procedures for protecting and safeguarding pupils are in place. Pupils enjoy school and know that there is always someone on hand to help them if they have any worries. The school places a high priority on meeting the needs of pupils with social and emotional difficulties. Forging close partnerships with parents and support agencies, for example, ensures that pupils' learning is not hindered. Teachers regularly assess their pupils, so that they know the standards they have reached. There are sometimes peaks and troughs in pupils' learning that are overlooked because information from tracking pupils' progress is not being used effectively to identify and support pupils who are starting to fall behind. Pupils are starting to become more involved in understanding what they need to do to reach their learning targets, for example in writing. These improvements are not yet fully consistent across the classes and are yet to be applied to mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management, including governance, are satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has remained tightly focused on ensuring that pupils enjoy school and make good progress in their personal development. He has enhanced the quality of pupils'

education, for example, by improving provision for ICT and by ensuring better resources for helping pupils to improve their reading skills. The deputy headteacher is improving systems for checking the school's performance and tracking pupils' progress. As a result, the school is aware that pupils' progress in writing and mathematics is not always as good as it might be.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate, but not yet fully effective in bringing about improvement. This is because subject leaders are still developing the skills to implement strategies to raise standards. The governors are well involved in the work of the school but are not always rigorous enough in evaluating its performance. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory and the school demonstrates sound capacity to improve in the future.

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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
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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 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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

12 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Burnley Lowerhouse Junior School, Lancashire, BB12 6LN

Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. You were polite, keen to talk to us and answered our questions thoughtfully. Your behaviour was good, and it is good to hear that you know there is always someone to help you if you have a problem. This is because all the adults care about you so much.

I particularly enjoyed joining you for assembly and seeing how proud you are of the certificates and rewards you receive when you have done something well. You showed me how grown up you can be when I heard you asking your local Member of Parliament so many sensible questions about her job. You listened so respectfully to her answers too. It is because you have chances like these that you become more and more confident as you move through the school. This prepares you for going to secondary school and helps you to think about your hopes for the future. Many of you told me how much you enjoy coming to school. You have a lot of chances to attend activities after school, such as Tae Kwon Do, which so many of you enjoy. Some of you even said that you would like to come at the weekend. Your parents are also pleased with the school.

Your school is a satisfactory school. You do as well as children in most other schools by the time you leave at the end of Year 6, but there are a few things that could be better. To help you further, your headteacher and staff are going to make sure that:

- you do as well in writing and mathematics as you do in reading and science
- you always have work that is just right for you – never too hard or too easy
- adults keep a closer check on how quickly you are learning and whether you are on track to reach your learning targets
- staff share responsibility for checking how good your school is and what needs to be done to make it better.

You can help your school by making sure that you tell your teachers if your work is too hard or too easy, and by asking them how you are doing with reaching your learning targets. Of course, you should continue to try your best in everything that you do.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Dodd

Lead inspector