

Burwood School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132008
Local Authority	Bromley
Inspection number	315901
Inspection date	19 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Judith Charlesworth

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	7-16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School	47
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Bell
Headteacher	Mr T P O'Leary Quinn
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2003
School address	Avalon Road Orpington BR6 9BD
Telephone number	01689 821205
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Age group	7-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Burwood School provides for learners with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Learners have generally had a disrupted school life before moving to Burwood and many have additional problems such as learning difficulties and mild autistic spectrum disorder. Initial assessments show that learners generally enter the school with literacy and numeracy skills at least two and a half years behind those expected for their age. The assessments also show that the older learners are, when they arrive, the further behind they tend to be. Learners are admitted at any age and at any time during the school year. Their profile of needs on entry is becoming increasingly complex and their behaviour tends to be more challenging than pupils previously sent to the school. The school has received lottery funding for sporting facilities and has been awarded the Healthy Schools status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Learners do not achieve enough at Burwood. The school has not successfully addressed a number of weaknesses that were identified in the inspection in June 2003, for example in attendance, the curriculum and parental involvement. In addition, other aspects of its work have deteriorated. The leadership and management of the school are inadequate, and supporting partnerships with external agencies, the local authority (LA) and the governing body are weak.

The school does not have robust systems to assure the quality of its work, to monitor its effectiveness in terms of learners' outcomes and to set challenging targets for improvement. The school's self-evaluation is over optimistic and a suitable agenda for improvement has not been set. A number of systems and practices have been introduced over recent years, but they have seldom been sustained. Governance is inadequate. Members of the governing body are not sufficiently well informed about the quality of the school's provision. Most are inexperienced in the role of 'critical friend' and in holding the school to account. When they have challenged the school to provide more information this has not always been forthcoming and they have therefore been unable to fulfil their responsibilities.

The staff at Burwood have been focussed on managing and improving learners' behaviour. They have been successful to some extent, although part-time placements and other such arrangements have been used too frequently to manage some pupils particularly challenging behaviour. There has been too little emphasis on improving behaviour through providing an interesting curriculum relevant to learners' needs. Sporting activities are used effectively as a means of rewarding and motivating learners. This helps them choose healthy lifestyles, and take part and give back to the local and wider community. The same focus has not been given to other aspects of learners' personal development, and it is unsatisfactory overall. The school is not working well enough to help learners stay safe, enjoy their education and develop the skills they will need for the future.

Incidents of bullying and racism are too common and the school has identified the reduction of these as a key priority. Learners do not enjoy school enough, and this is reflected in very low attendance. Nearly a quarter of the learners on roll never attend, and some of these are awaiting other placements. A further quarter has the equivalent of at least one day a week off school. Until this term, the arrangements for some learners to spend part of their time elsewhere further reduced their attendance. Many learners, therefore, do not attend school regularly enough to make sufficient progress. Those who do attend do not always enjoy their lessons and show this in an unwillingness to take part. Some reported to inspectors that they find school boring. This is partly the result of an unsuitable curriculum, particularly in Years 3 to 6 and 10 and 11. Personal social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship education are not given enough attention. However, the school provides a good range of extra-curricula and enhancement activities.

The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory although individual staff can teach lessons that are at least satisfactory and sometimes good. The quality of the curriculum, the lack of suitable resources and the absence of adequate support for staff compromise the overall

effectiveness of teaching. For example, performance management and a system to track learners' progress have only just been put into place. New staff are not provided with a suitable mentor or robust induction and there is no staff handbook to support them in aspects such as curriculum planning.

The care, support and guidance for learners are inadequate, although there are some satisfactory features. Staff clearly care about their pupils, and relationships between them are good. Child protection procedures for learners in school are good. However, some of the school's systems for ensuring safety, such as carrying out regular fire evacuation practices, dealing with bullying and racist incidents and recording events are inadequate. Partnerships with external agencies, such as local support services and businesses are unsatisfactory. The school has tried to engage relevant outside agencies to support learners. For example, it has sought help for learners with mental health issues, for parents with social problems and for work experience and college placements. It has tried to find alternative placements for those the staff feel are inappropriately placed at Burwood. However, the majority of these endeavours have been unsuccessful. Parental involvement in the school is low, and only two Ofsted parental questionnaires were returned. Individual education plans (IEPs) reflect the school's focus on improving behaviour, and include some academic targets, but the quality and relevance of academic targets are not monitored. Consequently, suitable support and guidance for learning cannot be given.

Given the school's deterioration since the last inspection, together with the inadequacy of leadership and management, the systems to support self-evaluation and the lack of robust supporting partnerships, Burwood does not currently have the capacity to improve without considerable support.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase its capacity to improve by establishing high quality leadership.
- Devise and implement the systems and practices needed to monitor, evaluate and assure the effectiveness of its work.
- Develop the curriculum to meet the needs and interests of learners of all ages.
- Develop suitable induction, professional development and support for staff to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning.
- Establish effective systems to improve attendance and deal with bullying and racist acts.
- Improve its partnerships with parents, the LA, external agencies and the community.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

The majority of learners make inadequate progress. A considerable number of boys are admitted into Years 9, 10 and 11, and they are particularly disinclined to attend school regularly and learn. However, throughout the school, boys who attend regularly, are well behaved and engage in lessons, make satisfactory progress. Some achieve GCSE accreditation and may choose to go on to college, although very few make enough progress to return to mainstream education before this time. The introduction of a pilot literacy project has shown the school how an interesting curriculum and good teaching, based on assessment of previous learning, has a very positive effect on achievement. Not all boys, however, are included in this project. The school has limited knowledge about the progress their pupils make because arrangements for tracking learning have only just been introduced and are not fully embedded.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 4

The learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is unsatisfactory. A significant number are poor attenders, and not all who attend enjoy everything that they do. Learners benefit from the school's Healthy School status and are happy to take part in activities that help them contribute to good causes such as the Macmillan Trust. The boys are pleasant and polite to visitors, but lack self-confidence. Some demonstrate challenging behaviour but this is usually short-lived. As their behaviour improves, most show an increased ability to reflect, take responsibility for their actions and understand the impact they have on others. However, not all act responsibly and some learners do not feel safe from bullying and racist acts. The lack of suitable opportunities for vocational and work-related learning, PSHE and citizenship education means that learners are not prepared well enough for engaging in further education, employment or training when they leave school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching and learning are inadequate overall. Nevertheless, most teaching seen was satisfactory, and some was good. In most lessons, learners' behaviour is well managed which supports learning effectively. Teaching assistants support individuals well and make a positive contribution to class work. In the best lessons, resources are used effectively, the atmosphere is purposeful but relaxed, the teacher's questioning draws out and adds to learners' knowledge and all are fully engaged and happy to contribute their own ideas. However, such good quality is not consistent because systems are not in place to support the staff. Teaching can be dull and the curriculum content does not always support learners' enjoyment. Consistent lesson planning has only just been introduced and is not embedded in teachers' practice. Rigorous assessment does not underpin learning targets, and lesson objectives are not always clear enough to determine whether learners have achieved them. Resources and artefacts for some subjects and age groups are limited, and the school environment lacks vibrancy.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The curriculum does not appeal sufficiently to learners' interests and aptitudes. However, the boys find sport, the enhancement activities and some recent developments motivating, which has led to better engagement and achievement. Examples include the introduction of a new information and communication technology curriculum and laptop computers, and the pilot literacy project. The curriculum for learners in Years 4 to 6 and 10 and 11 is particularly weak. It does not incorporate a sufficiently creative approach to excite and engage the younger boys. The classrooms for younger pupils are furnished similarly to those for older learners and are not appropriately resourced for the age group. The coordinator for Years 10 and 11 is working to improve the curriculum. However, development is hindered by the school's difficulty in establishing external partnerships with colleges and businesses, and there is no vocational education on the school site. The structure of the timetable does not appeal to the older learners. Subjects they perceive as boring, such as literacy and history are set for first lesson on most mornings, which does not encourage them to attend school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Staff genuinely care about the well-being of their pupils, but the school has not established the right systems to provide them with suitable guidance and support. Some systems are in place to safeguard the learners who attend school. However, the safety and welfare of the large number who do not attend, but remain the school's responsibility, cannot be assured. Learners' progress is monitored inadequately so they are not well enough informed about how they are doing in different subjects, and are not sufficiently involved in evaluating their own progress. However, behaviour is recorded appropriately and tracked over time, and learners are properly involved in reviews and plans for improvement in this aspect of their development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Inadequate leadership and management are at the root of Burwood's difficulties. The senior managers, governing body and LA do not work well enough in partnership, and there is a lack of clarity about how the complex needs of the learners should be met. The school asked the LA for support and this resulted in the commissioning of two external reviews of the provision. These have helped set an agenda for improvement, but have not increased the school's capacity to achieve it. The governing body is not currently strong enough and the school does not have the right systems and practices in place to monitor and improve its effectiveness. Teamwork within school is weak because newly designated roles and responsibilities are not yet working and staff are not properly supported. The school does not have the capacity to improve.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	4
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	4
How well learners enjoy their education	4
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	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	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

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?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

16 October 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Burwood School, Orpington, BR6 9BD

Thank you for letting us come into your lessons when we visited your school. We appreciated how polite you were to us, and the fact that you were happy to talk to us and show us some of your work.

My colleague and I found that the staff really care about your well-being and what happens to you. Through the sporting activities, provision of good food and activities that take place outside school, you learn to make healthy choices and to take part in and give back to the community. Relationships between you and the staff are good, and most of you learn to manage your behaviour successfully, when you choose to.

By now you have probably heard that we think your school needs some extra help. We have decided that it requires something called 'special measures'. This means that there are some important things wrong with it and it needs help to put these right. The most important thing for you to do, with the school, is to improve your attendance so that you learn more and become better prepared for your adult lives. Although only a minority of you are involved, we would also like the boys concerned to stop bullying and harassing each other, and think more about how this makes people feel. We have asked the school to improve the following areas to make school work better for you:

- the curriculum, so that you enjoy lessons more and teaching is more exciting
- the way it tracks your progress, so that it can help you learn more and work towards achieving some more challenging targets
- the way you are prepared for moving on to other schools, colleges and work
- the links it has with your parents and carers, and other professionals
- the leadership and management of the school, so that all the right systems are put into place to help you achieve as much as you can, and make the school a really effective place.

I wish you all the best for your futures

Yours faithfully

Judith Charlesworth

Lead inspector