

Lowerplace Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105777
Local Authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	324267
Inspection dates	4–5 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Barbara Flitcroft

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	395
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr A Blacker
Headteacher	Mrs E Hibbert
Date of previous school inspection	19 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Kingsway Rochdale Lancashire OL16 4UU
Telephone number	01706 648174
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Lowerplace is a larger than average size primary school with an Early Years Foundation Stage consisting of two Reception classes. Most pupils live locally. An above average proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is more than twice the national average. Almost half the pupils speak English as an additional language and many children are at an early stage of English language acquisition when they enter the Reception class. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, as is the number of pupils who have a statement of special educational need. The number of pupils arriving or leaving the school at times other than the start or end of the year is high. These pupils are often from other European countries and the Far East. The school has a number of awards including Healthy School, Eco School and the 'I Can' accreditation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Lowerplace is an outstanding school providing excellent value for money. Pupils make outstanding progress from their well below average starting points. By Year 6, they attain average standards due to excellent teaching and an exciting, high quality curriculum, within which the development of basic and key skills are given high priority. Excellent care, guidance and support and a very positive school atmosphere, lead to pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. The school provides excellent additional support for those who require extra help and to those who speak English as an additional language. The way in which the school meets the needs of these groups of pupils is a good example of the excellent way it promotes diversity and equality of opportunity.

Outstanding leadership and management are key factors behind the school's success. The headteacher is an outstanding leader and has formed a strong partnership with the deputy headteacher and middle managers to build a dedicated team who are committed to the all round development of their pupils. Leadership responsibilities have been distributed more widely since the last inspection. Successful curriculum teams enable staff to develop their skills in monitoring, evaluating and improving teaching and the curriculum. All leaders make a valuable contribution to the school's effectiveness. Governance is excellent. Governors take their responsibilities very seriously, offering high quality support and challenge. They have an extremely good understanding of the school's performance: this is systematically reviewed and findings are used very well to guide planning for improvement and to set challenging targets. The school's self-evaluation is accurate. This has enabled appropriate priorities for improvement to be identified and all the issues identified at the time of the last inspection have been addressed successfully.

Pupils follow the strong spiritual and moral lead given by adults in school. This is reflected in their outstanding personal development. Pupils are cared for exceptionally well and feel safe and secure in school, giving them the confidence to try their best and not give up when work is challenging.

Stimulating, high quality teaching enables pupils to make outstanding progress. Pupils learn enthusiastically and respond very well to their teachers' high expectations of learning and classroom behaviour. Skilful questioning is used to challenge pupils' thinking and to check their understanding. Assessment is used effectively to ensure that activities match the needs and abilities of the pupils. As a result, all groups of pupils are usually challenged very well. However, just on a small number of occasions there are not always sufficient opportunities for the most-able pupils to make the best possible progress. Teaching assistants have excellent relationships with pupils and these make a valuable contribution to learning and care.

Pupils, parents and the local community hold the school in high esteem. There are many positive comments about pupils becoming, 'well rounded and happy young people'. Parents appreciate the teaching and care their children receive and comment on the, 'hardworking staff that follow the example set by the headteacher.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children's skills at the start of Reception are well below those typically expected overall. In particular, when children start school many have very low basic skills, especially in

communication, language and literacy and limited knowledge and understanding of the world. Children thrive in the Early Years Foundation Stage thanks to the excellent provision and care so that, by the time they enter Year 1, many of these weaknesses have been eliminated or reduced and more show expected skills. From their individual starting points on entry, children make excellent progress. Staff have created a bright, vibrant learning environment. Expectations are high, welfare requirements are fully met and the emphasis on personal development ensures that the children quickly learn to play, work together and develop confidence and self-esteem. There is a very good balance between activities that children choose themselves and tasks that are more closely directed by adults. Very able teaching assistants are well deployed to teach specific skills and knowledge that children of this age need. Teachers make skilful use of assessment to devise indoor and outdoor activities within an exciting curriculum to target children's individual needs. Leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure there are always sufficient opportunities in lessons for the most-able pupils to make the best possible progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding. Until 2007, Year 2 pupils built well on their good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage to reach standards below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. In Key Stage 2 pupils progress consistently very well to reach average standards in English and slightly above average standards in mathematics and science in the national tests at the end of Year 6. Given their individual starting points, this represents outstanding progress. As a result of the school's highly effective strategies to improve teaching and learning, in the 2008 Key Stage 1 teacher assessments, pupils reached broadly average standards. Current standards in Year 2 are broadly average and indicate this improvement is being maintained with improving standards also evident in Key Stage 2. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, also make outstanding progress due to the focused and sensitive support they receive. Pupils arriving at the school other than the usual starting times are helped to settle very quickly and make similar progress to the other groups of pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school gives a high priority to pupils' personal development and their care, this is very successful in helping to turn pupils into confident and enthusiastic learners. Pupils love being at school, for example, they enthused about the religious education week which contributed very well to their spiritual and cultural awareness. Pupils have an excellent understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and make sensible choices about healthy food and eagerly participate in physical activities. They are independent and responsible. Pupils work very well together in a range of ways to contribute to the school and to the wider community and to prepare for their future. Older pupils seize opportunities to help younger children learn. Pupils carry out their roles as peer mediators and library monitors very seriously and proudly. Behaviour is good overall and often exemplary in lessons. Pupils respect themselves and others. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils develop a very good awareness

of the richness and diversity of world faiths and cultures. The school council plays an ever increasing role in school life, raising money for charities and interviewing prospective staff members. Attendance is average and improving due to the setting of challenging targets. The overall figures are affected by extended holidays in term time and religious observance.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Behaviour and relationships in lessons are excellent and make a significant contribution to pupils' outstanding achievement. Lively and stimulating lessons are well planned and designed to meet the abilities of all pupils. However, on a small number of occasions for the most-able pupils, there are not always sufficient opportunities for them to extend their skills to help them make the best possible progress. Staff make good use of excellent resources to provide a range of interesting activities that pupils greatly enjoy. Electronic whiteboards and computers add sparkle to lessons. The outstanding displays inspire and inform pupils, and the excellent use of praise and rewards by all staff keep pupils interested and motivated. There is excellent teamwork between teachers and the highly skilled support staff. The strategies to raise standards across the school since the last inspection have been extremely successful. Staff realise the importance of developing pupils' speaking and listening skills from the earliest age. Pupils' resulting increased fluency and confidence is impacting positively on their reading and writing skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. The strong emphasis on improving pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy makes a very significant impact on their achievement and on their personal development. The school strives to make learning as enjoyable and relevant as possible to individual pupils. It has developed a themed, creative approach to the curriculum that combines subjects to make lessons both interesting and wide reaching. Pupils respond enthusiastically to this approach and make excellent academic progress. The curriculum is greatly enriched with a wide range of exciting visits and visitors, residential visits and opportunities to take part in sport, drama and music. Pupils' skills and their personal development are greatly enhanced as a result. Opportunities for discussing issues of identity and diversity are integrated effectively across the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils' needs are rigorously assessed when they join the school at any stage. They are quickly provided with the extra help and support they need and their progress and well-being is carefully monitored. There are excellent links with local outside agencies to ensure that pupils are provided with the specialist expertise and assistance they require. Parents are highly appreciative of the care that all staff provide for their children. The excellent breakfast club is a good example of the school's impressive efforts to provide additional care for pupils. Pupils say they feel safe and there is always someone to whom they can turn if they are troubled or upset. Attendance is given a high profile and absences are pursued rigorously with governors involved. As a result attendance has improved year-on-year since the last inspection. The school assesses pupils'

work rigorously and meticulously tracks their progress towards challenging targets. Marking is carried out conscientiously and staff provide pupils with very useful advice about how to improve their work further. Pupils have many opportunities to assess their own and their classmates' work and have a good understanding of their own targets. This benefits their understanding and hastens their progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Outstanding leadership and management result in the school having an extremely accurate view of its effectiveness. All who work in the school share the vision for its continuing success and are passionate in driving it forward. Its capacity to improve is excellent because it examines its performance critically and takes very effective action to make things even better. This has led to outstanding improvement since the last inspection. For example, leaders, managers and governors have worked very effectively to raise standards in Key Stage 1 and improve attendance to the national average.

Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet current government requirements and equality of opportunity is strong. The very rare incidents of discrimination are dealt with rigorously and sensitively. There is a great sense of teamwork as the assistant headteachers and middle managers work with curriculum subject leaders. Together, they have a shared ambition to improve provision in their areas of responsibility that enables pupils to shine. The school provides excellent value for money. Community cohesion is good. The school has established links with other schools, including in Pakistan and Uganda, to share its diversity, good practice and each other's cultures and religious beliefs. The school makes available educational opportunities for the wider community, for example, weekly English language classes for adults. Governors are very supportive, offering a high level of challenge to the school. They have a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for development due to their commitment and as a result of the wealth of information provided by school leaders.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Lowerplace Primary School, Rochdale, OL16 4UU

Thank you for being so polite and helpful when I visited your school with the other inspectors. It was wonderful to see what a happy time you have there. You really enjoy your school because there are many exciting things to do and learn. Your mums, dads and carers think that your school is an excellent place to be and we agree with them. We think that your school provides you with an outstanding education.

You are taught extremely well and your teachers know exactly what each of you needs to learn. This helps you all to do equally well and enjoy lots of things. The teachers are very good at checking on how well you learn and help you to achieve the next steps in your learning. You have an excellent understanding of keeping healthy. You eat lots of fruit and vegetables in school and have lots of exercise when you play. You make sensible decisions about being healthy. You are very good at sharing and taking turns. Your behaviour is good in and around school and it is often excellent in lessons when you are engrossed in your learning.

I have asked the school to make sure that those of you who find learning easier than most always have opportunities in lessons to make even better progress. You too can help by continuing to work hard in lessons and by trying to learn as much as you possibly can.

Thank you for helping to make our short stay with you so interesting and good luck to all of you for the future. I hope that you carry on enjoying your school.