

Burnside Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108823
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	337161
Inspection dates	4–5 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Andrew Scott

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	186
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Lesley Cameron
Headteacher	Mr T Walker
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, pupils and a representative from the local authority. They observed the school's activities, in particular the teaching and learning in classrooms. They analysed the school's documentation and the questionnaires that were returned by parents and carers and by staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the quality of the provision and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the recent drop in standards, particularly in English, and the relative attainment of groups of pupils, especially boys
- the impact of the everyday curriculum on pupils' learning
- the influence of pastoral care on safeguarding, pupils' well-being, attitudes and behaviour
- the rigour and effectiveness of self-evaluation at all levels of management.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized urban primary school within an area of some social and economic disadvantage. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage; all speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, but there are more pupils with a statement of special needs than is typical, including a small number with autism. The school has a breakfast club and an after-school club, catering for about 18 children.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the safeguarding of pupils and the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The school has sustained most of its attributes since the previous inspection. Standards steadily improved in 2007 and 2008, especially in Key Stage 2; a fall in 2009 was due to staffing issues and the characteristics of some year groups. Despite these factors, pupils' progress over time was broadly satisfactory, as it is at present, helped by more settled staffing and satisfactory, sometimes good, teaching. Pupils' progress is satisfactory. Standards are broadly average in the current Years 2 and 6, including in English. Classrooms are positive places where pupils enjoy working. In the lessons that are well focused, stimulating and suitably challenging, pupils achieve well. However, not all lessons have high enough expectations of what pupils can do; as a result, progress is not swift and pupils lose attention and become restless. Teachers do not routinely make the best use of all subjects or contexts to bring learning alive and make it relevant to everyday needs, although there are interesting activities outside lessons.

Pupils are generally happy in school and get on well together. Bullying is extremely rare and pupils know who to turn to if they are troubled. The school's day-to-day care for pupils is good, especially for those with very specific needs, such as those with autism. However, the school has been remiss in not adhering closely to current government requirements about the employment of staff. In addition, not all relevant policies for the safeguarding of pupils are in place. The governing body has not been fully aware of its statutory responsibilities and duty to ensure that all requirements are met fully.

The school's self-evaluation is mostly satisfactory, although leaders are not always objective and decisive enough in tackling issues. Action plans are appropriate but not very detailed nor linked closely to pupils' learning; they are not monitored with enough rigour for the school to develop quickly. The problems of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage have remained unresolved for too long. Consequently, the development of teaching here has been inhibited, and key requirements, including safeguarding, have not been met. The school's leaders have recognised these shortcomings and are resolved to redress them. The school has already improved the teaching of literacy and numeracy in Key Stages 1 and 2, introduced richer aspects to the curriculum and established an effective out-of-school club. Overall, it has sufficient capacity to sustain further improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the safety of pupils by ensuring that:
 - government guidelines are scrupulously followed with relation to the employment of staff
 - all relevant and required safeguarding policies are in place, clearly up to date and ratified by the governing body
 - governors are fully aware of statutory requirements and their duties.
- Establish coherent leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage to provide clear educational direction, give more effective support for teaching and to ensure that all statutory requirements are met.
- Improve standards and pupils' achievement by:
 - providing work in lessons for all pupils that is sufficiently challenging and relevant to their needs
 - devising a curriculum that makes learning in lessons more meaningful and diverse.
- Strengthen self-evaluation procedures by ensuring that:
 - all analyses of the school's work have an appropriate balance of strengths and weaknesses
 - development plans are clearly based on such analyses, linked very specifically to outcomes for pupils and monitored more rigorously by senior staff and governors.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils enjoy coming to school and especially like the extra activities that the school provides. Their behaviour around school is good. They are usually attentive in lessons and appreciate a good challenge; even the youngest pupils work well independently when given the right input and opportunity. In some lessons, though, pupils' attitudes to learning wane when the subject matter is dry and uninspiring, or the pace of the lesson is too slow. As a result, they tend to lose interest and become restless, and behaviour is only satisfactory. This is part of the reason why their academic achievement is satisfactory and not better.

Standards are usually average in Key Stage 1. They suffered a downturn in 2009 but the starting points of the year group mean that pupils' progress was satisfactory over time. Standards in the current Year 2 are broadly average, as they are in Year 6. Standards have risen in Key Stage 2 in recent years, and were securely average in 2008. Staffing issues and other factors resulted in a lower performance in 2009, especially in English. The school is aware that the quality of boys' writing is not as good as that of girls and is working to overcome this. Overall, there are no other significant disparities in attainment between groups of pupils.

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Pupils make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They are considerate and caring towards one another and relate extremely well to pupils with disabilities. Socially, the school is very inclusive. Pupils benefit from a good range of art, drama and music. During the inspection many older pupils were busy rehearsing for a combined choir performance in Durham Cathedral. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe but are yet to adopt an appropriately healthy lifestyle. They have some good links with the local community but are only just beginning to be able to use their 'pupil voice' to influence the school's development. All in all, they are satisfactorily prepared for the next phase of their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory. Teachers take account of national strategies and guidelines to plan their lessons to ensure that they are well structured and allow for suitable progression in learning. In the better lessons there is a sharp sense of purpose and a clear momentum to learning, together with richer subject matter. The school has introduced the concept of a more creative curriculum to broaden

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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pupils' experiences. In all lessons there is a clear focus on basic skills but lessons often have undemanding activities, often but not exclusively for the more able pupils, and work that is too similar for different groups of pupils. Not enough teachers are flexible and imaginative in their approach in order to galvanise pupils and provide consistently high challenge that will produce faster learning.

A current priority is to develop pupils' personal and health education to improve attitudes to learning. This shows the school's commitment to improve standards but the plans do not allow enough for the natural motivation that exciting and challenging lessons bring. The many visits, visitors, clubs and other activities help to supply some of this provision. Academic support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory, but the academic and personal support for pupils with particularly acute needs is more skilled and successful.

The everyday pastoral care for pupils is good. Staff know pupils' personal needs well and, led by the headteacher, have worked to alleviate individual issues and the needs of vulnerable pupils, when possible with the expertise of external agencies. However, the school does not apply quite the same level of care to other pupils, such as gifted and talented pupils. Most importantly, the school has not taken enough care to ensure that statutory requirements and appropriate systems to safeguard pupils are fully in place. This means that the overall quality of care is inadequate.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	4

How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership of the headteacher has enabled the school to make steady progress in recent years. His philosophy of an inclusive school is shared by staff, although the inclusiveness is not as balanced as it could be. Supported by the governing body, he has dealt with staffing and other issues firmly to keep the school on an even keel, although not decisively enough to ensure swift improvement. Senior staff have played a key role in the school's development, especially in improving literacy and numeracy, but have not had enough scope to drive changes through. The leadership team monitors teaching from time to time, but not frequently enough and without a clear focus on its impact. This is why the school believes that teaching is good even though it acknowledges that the outcomes are satisfactory.

Self-evaluation is, nevertheless, satisfactory overall. The school's leaders have a fairly accurate view of the school's strengths but are less forthcoming about its relative

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weaknesses. Action plans are appropriately focused on the right kind of constructive actions, but they do not address all the pressing issues and link actions to specific outcomes. In addition, the headteacher and governors do not monitor the progress of these actions with sufficient rigour.

The school has been unclear about the extent of its responsibilities to safeguard pupils. While most systems are in place, not all are and governors have not ratified all policy documents; one key document is missing. The school has not been rigorous in its staffing arrangements and there is a lack of clarity about lines of responsibility among the leaders. Although governors work hard for the school, governance is inadequate because they do not maintain a robust enough overview of the school's work and ensure that all statutory requirements are met fully.

The school has satisfactory links with parents and carers. Most parents and carers are happy with their children's education; the school has tried to involve parents and carers more in their children's learning, with partial success. Good partnerships have been forged with agencies to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, although the impact of links on pupils' learning and well-being is mostly satisfactory. The school's approach to community cohesion is satisfactory. It has established an action plan this year but still has some way to go to maximise all aspects, including links with the wider world.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Despite a period of staff changes and lack of specific leadership in this key stage,

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children's academic and personal progress is satisfactory. Children usually enter the Nursery class with skills and abilities that are at levels below those of typical three-year-olds, although sometimes they are closer to the norm. Children make steady progress and reach levels in most areas of learning that are expected for their age by the end of their Reception Year; however, weaknesses in basic language remain. Teaching is satisfactory. A variety of activities supports children's independent learning but the activities are not systematically linked to children's needs and prior learning. As a result, children often practise skills without developing them properly. Occasionally, such consolidation is flawed; in one activity, when no adult was to hand, children actually reinforced errors in early reading, such as reversing letters in words.

Children's attitudes to learning are positive but are sometimes diluted by tasks that are too broad. Teaching and the curriculum have lacked a clear and informed oversight for some time, so the provision is not sufficiently streamlined and focused. Staff are eager for more direction and the school has begun to provide some support in conjunction with the local authority. This lack of leadership has also meant that not all procedures for safeguarding children are securely in place.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4

Views of parents and carers

Although only a minority of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire, the majority of their responses were wholly positive. They were especially pleased that their children are happy at school. The inspectors broadly agree with their views. Some parents and carers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities had written separately to express their appreciation of the school's support for their children. About one quarter of responses indicated some concerns, but there was no overriding issue. A few parents and carers were not happy with the school's handling of behaviour incidents as well as the progress of their children. The inspectors understand the concern about progress but feel that the school treats incidents of misbehaviour acceptably.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Burnside Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 38 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 186 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	50	19	50	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	21	55	17	45	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	16	42	19	50	2	5	1	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	34	20	53	3	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	17	45	18	47	1	3	1	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	12	32	22	58	3	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	11	29	23	61	3	8	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	14	37	19	50	2	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	42	19	50	2	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	32	20	53	6	16	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	32	22	58	2	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	18	47	16	42	3	8	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	16	42	18	47	2	5	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



06 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Burnside Primary School, Houghton le Spring, DH4 5HB

I am writing to thank you for the part you played in the recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed meeting you all and hearing your thoughts about the school. These have helped us to get to know your school better.

Although many parts of your school are satisfactory and a few are better, we have had to give the school a 'notice to improve'. This is because the school has not done all that it should have to make sure you are safe at all times in school. We know that you feel safe and the staff are very kind, but some of the systems that teachers use are not working properly. We have asked the governors to fix this without delay. In addition, the Nursery and Reception classes have not had anyone in overall charge for a while. We believe that it is important for someone to keep an eye on things, suggest improvements and carry them out.

We know that you like your school and that you make satisfactory progress in your work. Standards in English, mathematics and science are much as they should be for children of your age because teaching is satisfactory. Lessons rightly concentrate on basic skills, like learning spelling and times tables, and teachers are keen for you to do well. Not all work, though, is interesting or challenging enough for all of you and this prevents you from making faster progress. We would like the school to make sure that lessons are more interesting and the work is at the right level for your abilities. We are sure that you would rise to any such challenge and so improve your standards.

We think that you develop well socially and morally. This means that you get on well with other people and you understand right from wrong. Your behaviour is satisfactory overall. Although it is good around school, this is not always the case in lessons, especially when you lose interest in your work. You benefit from many activities like music, art and drama and know about healthy living, although some of you find it hard to have a healthy lifestyle yourselves. All in all, though, you are appropriately prepared for your life ahead.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr Andrew Scott

Lead Inspector

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