

Bowness Primary School

Church Street, Little Lever, Bolton, BL3 1BT

Inspection dates 19-20 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although pupils' progress is improving, it is not consistently good in all year groups.
- While teaching has improved significantly across the school, it is not leading to all pupils achieving well because not enough lessons are good and outstanding.
- Pupils' attainment is improving but is low in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- Not enough pupils are reaching the higher levels in their work because activities in lessons are not sufficiently challenging and less attention is given to the development of pupils' independent and thinking skills.
- Governors do not always provide sufficient challenge to senior leaders in improving the school.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils feel safe, have positive attitudes to their work, enjoy coming to school and behave well. When asked to express their views, they find it very difficult to think of any improvements they would like to see.
- Parents and carers agree that the school is improving under the current leadership and these comments express their views: 'The school is a better place to be now'; 'My child likes coming to school now and is making better progress.'
- Current leaders are working effectively to improve the school. They keep a close eye on the school's performance and are very clear about the direction the school must take to improve further.
- There is a relentless focus by senior leaders to improve pupils' attendance and achievement and to improve the quality of teaching.
- No stone is left unturned to ensure that all pupils, including those most vulnerable are well cared for, feel safe and supported.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector had meetings with staff, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of evidence including: the school's improvement plan; the tracking of pupils' progress; monitoring reports; the work pupils were doing in their books; and the school's documentation relating to safeguarding.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning in nine lessons and parts of four lessons and listened to a group of pupils read. In addition, the executive headteacher and acting headteacher conducted four joint observations with the inspector. The inspector also observed senior leaders reporting back to teachers on the quality of learning and pupils' achievement in lessons.
- The inspector met some parents informally at the start of the school day and took into account the responses to the school's own surveys. There were no responses from parents and carers to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Steve Isherwood

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school. Three out of the four classes consist of mixed-aged groups.
- The proportion of pupils known to eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The majority of pupils are White British, with an above average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including pupils from Pakistani heritage and pupils from Gypsy Roma Traveller families.
- The school exceeded the government's current floor standards in 2012, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school is currently led by an executive headteacher from a local support school and an acting headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Maintain the focus on improving teaching and learning to raise pupils' progress and attainment further, particularly in reading and writing by:
 - increasing the proportion of good and outstanding lessons
 - using assessment information more consistently to match work more closely for higher-ability pupils, thus ensuring that more pupils reach the higher levels in their work
 - ensuring greater rigour in planning to promote pupils' independent and thinking skills.
- Strengthen leadership by:
 - improving the awareness of members of the governing body of what goes on in the school and what needs improving
 - developing the skills of the governing body to challenge and hold senior leaders to account by improving their understanding of the links between attainment, progress and the quality of teaching and learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities below and sometimes well below those typically seen for their age. By the time pupils leave in Year 6 their attainment is low, particularly in reading and writing. This means that the progress pupils make from their starting points is not yet good.
- The progress of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage requires improvement. Senior leaders are not complacent and have introduced a wide range of improvements to resources, staffing and provision. As a result, classes are now exciting and interesting places to learn and children are beginning to make much better progress than they did before.
- Pupils' current work and the school's own data, along with the test results for 2012, show that increasing numbers of pupils are catching up and making better progress than in previous years. A notable success is that a high proportion of pupils in Year 6 last year made better than expected levels of progress in all subjects. This is because of recent improvements to teaching and increased expectations for pupils' progress. In addition, teachers are beginning to track more closely how well pupils are progressing.
- Although improving, not enough pupils are reaching the higher levels in their work. This is because of variability in how assessment information is used to plan work for pupils of higher ability and insufficient opportunities for pupils to organise their own activities and direct their own learning. This means that some of these pupils do not always achieve as well and as rapidly as they should.
- In reading, attainment is currently low at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 but improving securely. Pupils generally read with expression and enjoy talking about the author and content of their books. They are developing their skills to break down text and read unfamiliar words.
- The progress of disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those who are supported by the pupil premium is not yet good. Low attainment in basic literacy and weak provision in previous years has impeded their learning. Currently, these pupils are also catching up and their progress is increasing. They are benefiting well from the improvements in the way that the school plans their support and intervention activities.
- Pupils from Pakistani and Gypsy Roma Traveller heritage could achieve more. Like their peers, they are currently making better progress than they did previously because of whole-school improvements to teaching, higher expectations and in how the school's tracks their achievement.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has improved well recently but still requires improvement because of its impact over time on pupils' low attainment and because the progress that pupils make from their starting points is not consistently good.
- The proportion of good and better lessons is increasing but needs to improve further to overcome the legacy of underachievement and to make up for the gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Currently, most of the teaching is now good, although some inconsistencies remain. Lessons typically involve busy pupils responding with enthusiasm to the increased opportunities to discuss and share their work with others. Pupils are keen to learn new skills and answer questions readily in class. Enthusiastic and confident teachers are planning more frequently imaginative classroom activities that excite and motivate pupils. For example, pupils in the Year 5/6 class made good progress in writing an effective story of their own by using the book 'Treasure Island' to fire their imagination.
- Teaching assistants provide an effective layer of extra support, especially for those who find learning difficult.

- Where teaching is strongest, expectations are high, positive relationships exist between adults and pupils, teachers are skilled in developing pupils' thinking through effective questioning and teachers' monitor pupils' progress well. Although not yet consistent in all classes, pupils are supported effectively in knowing how to improve their work through comments from teachers' marking in their books.
- Where teaching is less strong, activities for higher-ability pupils lack pace and challenge. This is because assessment information is not used consistently to plan exactly what pupils can do and what they need to learn next. All too often, tasks for these pupils are restricted to writing a longer story or completing a harder sum with insufficient attention given to the development of pupils' higher-order thinking skills. In addition, in some lessons, activities do not sufficiently sustain pupils' interest and enthusiasm for longer periods.
- Not enough opportunities are provided across the curriculum for pupils to organise and direct their own activities or to make decisions about how they learn because in some lessons teachers tightly control what pupils do. This reduces pupils' ability to work independently.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour in and around school, in lessons and at playtime has improved dramatically because current leaders have successfully raised expectations, improved the quality of teaching and have relentlessly tackled a legacy of poor attendance. In addition, staff now manage pupils' behaviour effectively with consistent policies and procedures in place following training. As a result, there have been no exclusions for over a year and more pupils are attending regularly and arriving to school on time.
- Typically, pupils are polite, get on well with each and show respect and kindness to others regardless of age, race and disability. They enjoy all aspects of school life, which was obvious in discussions with them.
- Younger pupils are friendly and confident in approaching adults and visitors to school. They are very keen to find out who people are and are more than happy to engage in conversation. As one young child said politely to the inspector, 'Who are you and what are you doing here?', while another followed the inspector around with his 'Bob the Builder' tool kit and hard hat.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and praise the high levels of care they receive from staff. They understand what constitutes unsafe situations and the basic principles of how to keep themselves safe. Break times and lunchtime are well supervised and pupils enjoy playing and interacting with each other. They are very aware to look out for those on the yard who have no one to play with.
- Pupils' attendance and punctuality have improved significantly over the last year as the school has improved. Pupils enjoy coming to school more now because their lessons are getting better. 'Learning is now fun', said one child.
- Instances of all kinds of bullying and disruptive behaviour are rare. When they do occur they are dealt with effectively by staff. As one child commented, 'I used to get teased about the colour of my skin but it doesn't happen now, everyone gets on'.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership overall is not good yet because pupils' achievement and teaching require some improvement. However, this does not fully convey the full picture as over the last year current leaders and managers have shown high quality leadership in getting the school to this point. Working in close cooperation with the staff from the support school, spearheaded by the executive headteacher and acting headteacher, the actions of leaders have been pivotal in bringing about the school's rapid improvement. In a relatively short

period of time, much has been accomplished between staff at Bowness and the support school in tackling the school's past shortcomings. The bar has been raised, teamwork is now strong and there is clear agreement on where further improvements are required. As one member of staff commented, 'The school is a completely different place to work in now, we feel valued and supported in our work.'

- Although much remains to be improved in raising pupils' attainment further and in accelerating their progress in reading and writing, the school is now on the right path with effective plans in place to drive the school forward towards being a good school. The school's promotion of equal opportunity is improving. For example, highly focused work on improving pupils' mathematical skills is beginning to bear fruit, with increasing numbers of pupils making better progress in all year groups. Furthermore, the school does not tolerate discrimination and emphasises the importance of good relationships.
- The quality of pupils' learning is improving securely because the leadership of teaching has become more focused and the performance management of staff is monitored more effectively.
- The curriculum is not good yet because the progress of all learners and groups in reading and writing is not consistently good, particularly for higher-ability pupils. In addition, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their independent skills and make decisions about how they learn across different subjects. On the other hand, the curriculum provides a clear focus on the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development with a rich variety of visits and visitors into school. These experiences add considerable enjoyment to pupils' learning and are much appreciated by all.
- Considering the advances in the school's performance over the last year and along with its other strengths including the rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress and accurate self-evaluation, the school is well placed to improve further.
- The support for the school in past years from the local authority has been patchy and the school has suffered with a succession of different support partners. However, the school is now receiving high quality advice from an associate school improvement professional.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - the governing body is a relatively new team with some new appointments and vacancies; they are very committed to see the school improve and are keen to access further training to support their development
 - increasingly, governors are more aware of what goes on in the school through visits to classrooms and joint observations of teaching and learning with staff; the Chair of the Governing Body is not complacent and recognises this is an aspect for further development
 - statutory responsibilities are met; all staff have been vetted and are trained appropriately to keep pupils safe and free from harm
 - there is still further work to be done to increase the confidence of the governing body to challenge senior leaders and to act as a critical friend to the school; members' skills in making judgements on how well the school is performing by understanding the links between attainment, progress and the quality of teaching are currently underdeveloped.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105197
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	400766

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	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	98
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Gallimore
Headteacher	Mike Tonge (Executive Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	3-4 February 2010
Telephone number	01204 333140
Fax number	01204 333140
Email address	head@bowness.bolton.sch.uk

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