

Barrowford School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119166
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313206
Inspection dates	30 April –1 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Jennie Platt

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 on roll	
School	259
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Stewart Cooper
Headteacher	Mr John Hufferdine
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2004
School address	Rushton Street Barrowford Nelson Lancashire BB9 6EA
Telephone number	01282 615644
Fax number	01282 618158

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is slightly larger than average although the number on roll is declining. It serves a wide area including areas of social and economic deprivation. A below average percentage of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than the national average as is the number of pupils from minority ethnic groups. Currently, no pupils need support because they are learning English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school which is popular with parents. They are happy about the care given to their children which is outstanding. Pupils say they feel safe and certainly know how to care for themselves. Personal development is good with some outstanding features. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and attendance is above average. Behaviour is good. Year 6 pupils are a credit to the school being mature, confident and responsible young adults. They are caring and have established strong and long-lasting friendships. This growing maturity combined with their good academic skills prepares pupils exceptionally well for the future.

Achievement is good. Standards at the end of Year 2 are broadly average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 but the more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged and do not make enough progress. Progress is good in Years 3 to 6 and pupils leave school with above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Teaching and learning are good and this is a major reason for pupils' good overall progress. They are eager to learn because lessons are fun and include a variety of activities. This is more noticeable in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1. Although several parents expressed a concern about the organisation of teaching in Years 5 and 6, their concerns are unfounded. Learning accelerates in these years where some teaching is outstanding and the impact can be seen clearly in the rising standards. Results of national tests in Year 6 in previous years have been lower than current standards because the more able pupils underachieved. The school's response has been effective and a change of curriculum and higher expectations from teachers have led to pacy lessons that challenge and motivate pupils. This has resulted in an above average number of pupils in Year 6 exceeding the level expected for their age.

The school is a vibrant place to learn because of the richness of the curriculum. The new approach to planning has a clear focus on teaching skills as well as uniting subjects under a common theme. This ensures continuity of learning as pupils change from class to class as well as making learning more purposeful and interesting. Parents and pupils appreciate the excellent number and variety of extra-curricular activities that introduce pupils to new experiences especially in music and sport. Personal and social education plays a significant role in the curriculum. The practical activities in these lessons lead to pupils having a good knowledge of healthy lifestyles. High quality care leads to a harmonious community. Pupils enjoy helping in the school community and all Year 6 pupils diligently carry out a number of duties to help the school run smoothly. They show a caring spirit beyond the school gates by supporting many charities.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has served the school well over many years and sustained a determination to keep enjoyment at the heart of learning. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school knows itself well. There is a drive to raise standards especially following a dip in previous years. Although all are involved in the evaluation process the school is looking to involve subject leaders more in monitoring what is happening in the subjects they lead. Progress since the last inspection is good and standards have improved. Governance is good: governors have managed a difficult financial situation well ensuring that the budget balances and the school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children start school with skills that are lower than is usually seen for their age. Carefully managed arrangements as children start school combine well with a well-ordered day to enable children to settle happily and feel secure. Teaching is good and staff work very well as a team, planning a stimulating range of exciting activities. For example, children enthusiastically took digital photographs to make a video of their puppet show of the Gingerbread boy. A typical parent's comment is, 'My child is very happy in school and cannot wait to get here in the morning.' Staff extend learning to the outdoors as much as possible even acting out chasing the Gingerbread boy on a wet day. However, the available space is not easily accessible and lacks stimulation for this age group. Nevertheless, children make good progress in all areas of learning and by the end of the Foundation Stage children reach the level expected for their age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the progress of the more able pupils in Key Stage 1.
- Further develop the monitoring roles of subject leaders.
- Extend provision for outdoor play for children in the Foundation Stage.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards as pupils leave school are above average. A good start in the Foundation Stage means pupils start in Year 1 at the level expected for their age. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and at the end of Year 2 standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science are broadly average. This is a similar picture to the teachers' assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2007. The number of pupils exceeding the level expected for their age, especially in writing and science, is below average and the more able pupils do not make enough progress.

Test results at the end of Year 6 show a steady rise from being significantly below average in 2005. The school identified underachievement at that time, especially for the more able pupils. A more imaginative curriculum and higher expectations of teachers have successfully tackled this weakness. Encouraging outcomes were evident in 2007 and this has been built on with the current Year 6 pupils. Standards are now above average with an increase in the number of pupils working at levels above those expected for their age. The success is especially evident in writing which shows real improvement in response to pupils' growing confidence to express their ideas.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because their needs are identified early and advice sought to ensure the guidance provided matches their individual need.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development is good. Pupils are friendly and polite and form very good relationships with adults and with each other. Almost all have positive attitudes to learning, underpinned

by good behaviour. Their enjoyment of school is excellent and they eagerly participate in all that is on offer.

Attendance is above average. The school's ethos and embedded values ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, and social development is good. Cultural development is satisfactory. Although pupils are taught about other faiths and cultures, not all pupils have a well developed sense of what it means to live in a multicultural community. Pupils say they feel safe in school and are confident that their concerns will be listened to. They understand, and mostly accept, the agreed code of conduct and show concern for the safety and well-being of others. A very small minority, whose learning skills are less well developed, can occasionally lose concentration and disturb lessons. Serious misbehaviour is very rare and the number of exclusions is very low.

Pupils' awareness of the importance of exercise and nutrition in a healthy lifestyle is shown in the way they use the good facilities the school provides for physical activity and healthy eating. They enjoy helping others, for example, through acting as 'buddies' to others or charity fundraising and are proud of the work of the school council in bringing about improvement. Stimulating teaching and a more creative curriculum have given older pupils the self-confidence to work both independently and collaboratively in groups. With their good basic skills, they are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good, although this varies across the school. Good features which are common to all classes include effective organisation and management of pupils so that lessons are well ordered and behaviour is good. Classrooms are awash with vibrant displays and teachers prepare resources well. The use of the interactive whiteboard successfully adds interest to lessons. Strong teaching, including some outstanding lessons, was seen especially in Key Stage 2 and is characterised by challenge and a brisk pace that sustains learning throughout the lesson. The results can be seen in the quality and quantity of work in pupils' books. These show high expectations and pupils respond with some high quality and well presented work. The variety of approaches is good in many lessons with teachers making good use of practical activities to make learning enjoyable. In a Year 6 science lesson, for example, the teacher most effectively clarified the concept of circulation by relating it to pupils' own experience. They know the heart is roughly the same size as their fist and that blood circulates round the body like a bus picking up what it needs and dropping off what is surplus to requirements. In other lessons expectations are not always high enough to ensure all make good progress. Pupils are not fully engaged in their learning as lessons include too much talking and inactive time. Experienced and well trained teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to learning especially in leading lessons as well as groups.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A well organised curriculum meets requirements and contributes enormously to pupils' enjoyment and readiness to extend learning beyond the classroom. Parents appreciate the new approach to the curriculum which unites the teaching of skills under one topic because they consider it makes their children more excited about their learning. One parent describes her children as 'coming home buzzing with excitement' and is amazed by their knowledge across a broad range

of subjects. Careful planning ensures more opportunities for creativity and independent learning. This approach is contributing to the improved standards as pupils leave school because they approach their work with an air of confidence and an ability to make decisions. The needs of all groups of pupils are met, save for some lack of challenging activities for the more able pupils in Key Stage 1. Well targeted additional support sessions enable pupils who find learning difficult to have full access to the curriculum and make good progress.

Pupils and parents appreciate the excellent range and quality of extra-curricular activities, educational trips, sporting challenges and opportunities for involvement in community events. These activities contribute immensely to pupils' enjoyment and appreciation of the importance of keeping fit and healthy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good with some outstanding features. Pastoral care is a major strength of the school. Positive relationships combined with a caring philosophy ensure that each child feels safe and ready to learn. Brief but effective weekly meetings check on any pastoral concerns and enable staff to share their knowledge of the pupils so all are involved in monitoring and support. Pupils know there is always someone to turn to for help because adults are committed to ensuring the care and well-being of every child. Procedures for health and safety, risk assessments and child protection are in place. Parents are pleased their children feel safe, as one parent said, 'I know that when I leave my child she is in good hands'.

Academic guidance is good. Detailed tracking of pupils' progress enables the school to identify any underachievement and to take effective action with additional support in class and in small groups. The school is currently extending assessment procedures to make it clearer how pupils are progressing towards the National Curriculum levels expected. Staff are starting to involve pupils more in their own learning by setting targets. In the best lessons teachers remind pupils of these targets but sometimes these are overlooked or too much information is provided and pupils become unclear about what is expected of them and how they can improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is an effective leader and has sustained a happy community keeping a close eye on standards so that when a decline occurred it was promptly halted and standards are now improving. He has prepared the school well for his imminent retirement leaving a well organised team of staff, a healthy financial situation and good capacity to improve.

The headteacher is ably assisted by a highly effective deputy headteacher and the support of governors and staff. Self-evaluation is accurate because it is based on close monitoring of provision in school as well as pupils' progress. Data is used well to set challenging targets and early indications point to these being exceeded this year. Currently, the monitoring, especially of teaching, is carried out mainly by the headteacher and deputy. This role is being delegated to subject leaders as at present they do not play a full part in evaluating what is working well and planning actions to raise standards further. Governance is good and governors know the school very well. They closely review how well the school is doing but as yet do not play a full part in the early decision making process. They keep a close eye on spending and checking that pupils learn in a safe environment.

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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?	2
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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

2 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Barrowford School, Lancashire, BB9 6EA

Thank you very much for the friendly welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school. We had a wonderful time and you helped us very much by being polite and helpful.

You go to a good school. Teachers make your lessons interesting and you make good progress. Your behaviour is good and it is lovely to see that you thoroughly enjoy school. Your parents told us that they liked the new way your subjects are being grouped together. It is clear that this is making learning more exciting for you. It was good to hear that you are continuing your learning at home with model making and research. We think that you have an excellent variety of clubs after school that encourage you to take part in a range of activities, especially in music and sport. This will encourage you to learn new skills and keep fit and healthy.

There are three aspects of the school that we think can be even better and we have asked your teachers to:

- make sure all of the pupils in Years 1 and 2 make as much progress as possible
- include more staff in checking how well the school is doing
- find ways to improve the outside area for the children in the Reception classes.

We are sure you all will have many happy memories of your education at Barrowford School and wish you all good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Jennie Platt, Peter McKay and Jean Havard

Your inspection team