

Alkrington Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105786
Local Authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	355837
Inspection dates	14–15 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Stephen Isherwood HMI

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	396
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Chadwick
Headteacher	Mr Tim Barnes
Date of previous school inspection	11 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 18 teachers and 20 lessons. They held meetings with staff, governors, groups of pupils and a representative from the local authority. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of evidence including: the school's safeguarding procedures, the school improvement plan, the tracking of pupils' progress, monitoring reports, the work pupils were doing in their books and the questionnaires completed by 154 parents and carers, 38 staff and 130 pupils.

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

- how well pupils achieve from their starting points, particularly from Year 1 to Year 6
- the quality of pupils' learning and engagement in lessons and across the curriculum
- whether teaching and teachers' use of assessment data is leading to pupils making better progress than previously
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers in tackling the school's weaknesses and improving outcomes for pupils
- the capacity of the leadership team to sustain improvement.

Information about the school

The school is larger than the average primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average as is the number of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most pupils are of White British heritage and few pupils are new to learning to speak English as an additional language. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of Nursery and Reception classes. The Happy Days before- and after-school club operates from the school premises but is not managed by the school. This provision was not part of this inspection.

The headteacher was appointed in January 2010. The school is experiencing major changes and disruptions to staffing. Six new teachers joined the school in September 2010. Staff absence remains high. There are currently four classes taught by temporary teachers. The school has gained the Healthy School status and has achieved the Financial Management Standard for schools.

At its previous inspection, in October 2009, the school was judged to require a notice to improve. The monitoring visit in April 2010 found that the school was making inadequate progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising pupils' achievement.

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

4

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 special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading and managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvements.

The overall effectiveness of the school has not improved since the last inspection in 2009. It is still inadequate. This means that the school's capacity to sustain improvement is weak because the issues to improve the school, identified at the previous inspection, have not been fully resolved. The pace of change has been too slow. For example, pupils' achievement, while improving slowly, is still inadequate because too many learners do not make enough progress considering their starting points and the good start they receive in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school judges its overall effectiveness to be satisfactory but in doing so, has not taken sufficient account of the underachievement of pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 and the fact that more-able pupils are not consistently challenged to reach their potential.

The overall quality of teaching has improved since the last monitoring inspection. It is now satisfactory, as is the progress made currently in lessons. However, not all lessons are consistently challenging and engaging enough to stimulate learning, accelerate pupils' progress and compensate for the legacy of underachievement and the gaps in pupils' skills. Not enough lessons are consistently good. The use of assessment data by teachers to match work appropriately to learners lacks precision in some classes. Across the curriculum, there are too few opportunities planned to excite and fire the pupils' enthusiasm for learning, especially for the more-able. Where teaching is best, expectations are high, learning is fun and pupils are given every opportunity to discuss and share their ideas with others. Where teaching is less strong, the range of teaching styles is too narrow, teachers over-direct, and pupils are not sufficiently engaged in their learning.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes have improved steadily over the last year, both in class and around the school. They enjoy coming to school, feel safe and are confident that adults will listen and act on their concerns.

Senior leaders are still battling to overcome many challenges, including high staff absenteeism, temporary appointments and high numbers of supply teachers. Nevertheless, they have been slow to respond to the key issues for improving the school over the year, have lost valuable time and have misjudged the pace of change required. Consequently, many staff are not sure of their role, are confused, and feel undervalued. Morale is very low. There is no agreed vision for improving the school. Senior leaders accept there are bridges to build with the workforce and that staff must unite if real progress is to be achieved in improving the school. They recognise that everyone needs to

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channel all their efforts into raising the achievement of pupils and improving their outcomes.

Despite its shortcomings, the school has some elements that indicate potential for things to improve. Staff are working hard to bring about change. Pupils are beginning to make better progress in their work as a result of recent improvements to teaching and learning. Pupils' work in books is improving. Children get off to a really good start in the Nursery and Reception classes. The governing body is gaining confidence in supporting and challenging the school. The high number of exclusions over the previous school year has been reduced and pupils' behaviour is improving. The school provides effective support for pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress and are well provided for. Teaching assistants provide effective support.

However, senior leaders are under no illusions about the task that lies ahead and all parties acknowledge that much remains to be done to get the school back on track.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the progress of pupils at Key Stage 1 and 2 by:
 - – maintaining the focus on improving teaching and learning and eliminating inadequate practice
 - – increasing the proportion of good and better lessons
 - – using assessment information more consistently to match work more closely to pupils' differing needs, particularly for the more-able
 - – broadening the range of teaching styles to stimulate pupils' greater involvement in learning
 - – improving the consistency of teachers' planning
 - – providing more exciting and stimulating activities across the curriculum.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - – establishing an agreed vision for improving the school
 - – increasing the pace of change
 - – developing the role of middle managers in gathering secure evidence on the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' performance
 - – holding staff to account more effectively for the progress pupils are making.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

In the better lessons, pupils usually try hard and are eager to please. Their enjoyment of learning picks up when tasks are exciting and stimulating. They particularly enjoy activities where they can test and deepen their knowledge by investigating and finding things out for themselves. For example in a Year 6 lesson, the atmosphere buzzed with excitement as pupils made good progress in their understanding of fractions and probability by playing different games including using the computer. However, too much of pupils' learning is characterised by insufficient opportunities for pupils to direct their own learning

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and to discuss and share their ideas with others. In these lessons, where teachers over-direct and where pupils are faced with a lack of demand, stimulus and activity, their interest wanes and restlessness ensues.

National test results over time, together with the school's own data which tracks pupils' progress, show that, while their attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average, pupils' achievement is inadequate overall. Too many learners in Years 1 to 6, particularly the more-able and those who are just above average have not been achieving as well as they should. The overall rate of progress that has been made by pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 has been too slow and has not built effectively on the good start they receive in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Nevertheless, pupils' current work is improving because satisfactory teaching is enabling more pupils to catch up and make better progress than previously.

Pupils start Year 1 with skills that are above those typical for their age. By the end of Year 2 attainment in 2010 is below the national average at the expected Level 2 and at the higher Level 3. Progress in Years 3 to 6 is patchy. While more pupils are making better progress as a result of improvements to provision, overall, too many pupils are not reaching the potential they showed at the beginning of Year 1. Higher-attaining pupils are not always stretched and challenged sufficiently well. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because their needs are identified early and they receive well targeted support and intervention.

Pupils speak highly of the learning mentor and say they feel safe in school. They are confident that staff will listen to their concerns and that any problems will be swiftly resolved. Increasingly, pupils recognise the difference between right and wrong and get on well with each other. Although the school encourages pupils to develop an appreciation of the wide range of cultures that make up British society, this aspect of their understanding is relatively less well developed.

Pupils' behaviour is steadily improving. This has taken a great deal of work by staff but is providing a basis for some early signs of improved learning and progress in some classes where pupils receive a consistency of approach and where the learning is engaging. Pupils have a good understanding of how to live healthily. This has been endorsed by the school's achievement of the Healthy Schools status.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
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	2
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	3

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

How effective is the provision?

Following the monitoring inspection in April 2010, senior leaders have made some headway in improving the quality of teaching. New appointments are beginning to make a difference, the number of inadequate lessons is reducing, there are more examples of good practice and teachers are using fewer worksheets. In the better lessons, relationships are good, pupils are excited by the activities, lessons are carefully planned and teaching assistants make a valuable contribution. When all these features come together, pupils thrive on the excitement and challenge that the lesson provides and they make good progress. A good example was seen in a Year 3 lesson, where pupils were investigating what they could do to help diseased animals.

However, too few lessons are consistently good enough to ensure previous gaps in knowledge and learning are resolved. Opportunities to involve pupils in their own learning are frequently missed and many of the tasks lack dynamism. Activities are not consistently well enough matched to pupils' abilities, particularly for the more-able. As a result, pupils' learning is limited. As one pupil said, 'Some of the work is hard but some of it is too easy'. Another pupil commented that he 'needed pushing more'. In addition, in the weaker lessons not enough use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance pupils' learning.

The curriculum provides some strong support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities but does not yet provide enough stimulating and exciting opportunities

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for pupils on a regular basis, particularly for the more-able. Much of the school's focus on improving the quality of pupils' learning in English, mathematics and science has meant that creative and innovative aspects in other areas of pupils' work are less well developed at present.

Pastoral care and support to vulnerable pupils are well targeted through the strong work of the inclusion team and the learning mentor. All adults know the pupils and their families well. Effective links with local schools and agencies ensure pupils' smooth transition to secondary school.

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	3

How effective are leadership and management?

In spite of some recent improvements to provision, the effectiveness of senior leaders in embedding ambition and driving improvement is weak overall. This is because many of the issues to improve the school highlighted at the last inspection in October 2009 have not been tackled with sufficient rigour. Senior leaders are correct in realising that maintaining the focus on improving teaching is crucial to bring about sustained improvements in pupils' progress and in their learning. The school is heavily reliant on external support from the local authority and still requires significant improvement.

Although the school now has satisfactory procedures to promote equality and tackle discrimination, weaknesses remain in pupils' progress and in the quality of their learning. Procedures to hold staff to account for the progress pupils make have begun to make a difference but need to go further. In addition, the role of middle leaders in evaluating provision is still underdeveloped. Many staff are unclear of their roles and responsibilities and the way ahead. The pace of change has been too slow and there is no shared vision for improving the school.

The governing body is increasingly confident to act where necessary to support improvements or to question proposals and have been strengthened by some new appointments. They are committed to see the school improve. They engage well with staff and are aware of the main challenges that the school still faces. All procedures and checks for safeguarding pupils' health and well-being are in place and meet statutory requirements.

The school's promotion of community cohesion is ineffective. Senior leaders do not plan or evaluate the school's contribution effectively and have not audited the school community with regard to faith, ethnicity and culture and socio-economic factors.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
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	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	4
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

When children join the school their skills are broadly in line with those expected for their age. They get off to a good start, settle swiftly into routines and make good progress in their learning. This is because good relationships are promoted well and a warm, caring ethos prevails, where every child is well supported and cared for. Adults are skilled in promoting children's good behaviour and kindness to others while encouraging their independence. Activities are well targeted, matching accurately with children's stages of development. Children enjoy learning; for example, in one session to develop their language and communication, children enthusiastically acted out actions to show the sounds in simple words. Elsewhere, children developed their manipulative and creative skills by making pies with playdough, spontaneously singing a song about a gingerbread man as they went along. All staff are skilled in knowing when to intervene and how to interact with children to enhance their learning. Very good use is made of the outdoor environment, particularly in the Nursery where some of the provision is outstanding, and which mirrors the learning inside.

Staff assess how well children are achieving and use the information to plan further challenges. By the start of Year 1, children are working above the levels expected for them and have made good progress from their starting points. Parents are increasingly involved in their children's learning. Leadership is strong. Staff are forward-thinking and reflective. They have a good awareness of the strengths in provision and where further improvements can be made.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers are supportive of the school. There is strong agreement that children enjoy school and feel safe. A small minority of parents and carers expressed some concern about the progress their children are making. Several comments were received by inspectors about the number of different teachers that their children have encountered, particularly in Years 3 and 4 and how disruptive this has been. Inspectors endorse their concerns and discussed these issues with senior leaders. The school is aware of the situation and is making strenuous attempts to rectify the problem with the appointment of new and permanent members of staff.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Alkington 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 154 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 396 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	73	48	76	50	3	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	63	41	87	57	2	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	47	31	77	50	19	12	7	5
My child is making enough progress at this school	39	25	73	48	26	17	8	5
The teaching is good at this school	39	25	80	52	17	11	8	5
The school helps me to support my child's learning	34	22	91	59	16	10	7	5
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	39	25	99	65	11	7	1	1
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)	35	23	80	52	11	7	4	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	41	27	77	50	19	12	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	40	26	84	55	14	9	4	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	18	86	56	19	12	5	3
The school is led and managed effectively	44	29	82	54	15	10	4	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	53	35	66	43	18	12	8	5

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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 pupils' 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.



18 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Alkrington Primary School, Manchester, M24 1JZ

Thank you for helping the inspectors when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed chatting to you in lessons, in the playground and in the interview with some pupils. You expressed your views very clearly and they were very helpful to us.

We looked carefully at your school and found that it should be better. We have decided that your school needs 'special measures'. This means that your teachers will get extra support to help the school to improve. Inspectors will return to the school on a regular basis to check that things are getting better.

We found that many of you are not learning as well as you should, given the good start you get in the Nursery and Reception classes. Some of your work is too easy for you. However, we were pleased to see that your behaviour is improving and that you help one another in class and around the school. We could see how seriously you take your responsibility of being a 'Playground Pal' to others. We were also delighted to read all the good news about the Reception children on their special leaf tree.

We have asked your headteacher, governors and teachers to make the school more effective by:

- increasing the progress you make in Years 1 to 6
- making sure that more of your lessons give you opportunities to learn in different ways
- making sure that more of your lessons are like the best ones we saw when you were very interested in your work
- improving the activities you do so they are more exciting and challenging
- getting your teachers to look more closely at how well you are learning so that they can plan harder work for you
- making sure that all the leaders and staff work together to improve the school.

You can all help them by continuing to work hard and by telling your teachers what makes your lessons interesting and what helps you to learn.

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood

Her Majesty's Inspector

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