

Irk Valley Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105452
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	355777
Inspection dates	14–15 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Eithne Proffitt

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	345
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Maureen Kennedy
Headteacher	Mr Gary Schofield
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2008
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons, observing 10 teachers. Meetings were held with the leadership team, members of the governing body, middle managers, staff and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation including monitoring and improvement planning; a variety of school policies, safeguarding procedures, records of all pupils' progress and the school's self-evaluation procedures. Inspectors also analysed questionnaires returned by 150 parents and carers, 113 pupils and 21 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The current learning, progress and attainment of pupils across the school.
- How effectively pupils, especially the more-able, are challenged in their learning.
- The impact of the school's work on improving pupil progress and raising attainment.
- The effectiveness of the school's strategies to raise attendance.
- The capacity of leaders and managers at all levels to sustain improving outcomes for pupils.

Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average primary school situated to the north of Manchester city centre. Almost all of its pupils are from minority ethnic groups and the vast majority of pupils speak English as an additional language. There are 28 languages spoken in addition to English, the main ones being Urdu, Punjabi and Arabic. There are significant numbers of pupils who join or leave the school at times other than the usual. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much higher than usually found. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is just below average. The school has Healthy School status. Since its previous inspection, the school has moved to new, purpose-built accommodation.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Irk Valley provides its pupils with a satisfactory quality of education. The school is now in a more settled period as the governing body, the headteacher and staff have successfully steered the school through a move to new premises and, after recent absence, the headteacher has now returned to his full-time post.

The school embraces its multi-cultural, multi-faith character. It ensures the smooth, successful transition of the exceptional number of pupils who join or leave the school at times other than expected. However, the combined challenges of this high mobility, English language development and extended family holidays continue to impact negatively on some pupils' progress and the school's low attendance rates.

The school confronts these challenges 'head-on' and has adopted a number of strategies and procedures intended to lessen their impact. The school can evidence successes, especially in the progress of pupils who are at the school for extended periods and for those whose attendance is persistently low. However, despite the school's efforts, initiatives are taking time to convert into improved outcomes overall.

From low starting points in the nursery, pupils' progress and achievement during their time in school, although inconsistent, are generally satisfactory and an increasing number reach expected levels by the end of Year 6. Assessment of pupils' progress and performance is now monitored more regularly. However, some current systems do not provide instant, concise data for analysis.

The school has identified that some groups of pupils, including the more-able in particular year groups, White British pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, do not always achieve as well as they should. As a result of a major emphasis on supporting these pupils, some, although not all, are now reaping substantial rewards. There is a wide range of highly focused support, often on a one-to-one basis, and there are some 'split' teaching sessions in Year 6. The impact of teaching in lessons, however, is more variable, because teaching is inconsistent in quality and does not allow all pupils to make good or better progress. The school therefore demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Pupils are well-behaved, enjoy their time in school, and appreciate all that the school does for them. They are developing into mature young people who have an admirable sense of pride in their new school. Pupils feel respected as individuals and know their welfare is paramount.

Leaders and managers are clear about the school's acknowledged strengths and areas for improvement and have accurately assessed the school's effectiveness.

Senior leaders, supported and challenged by a visible governing body, form a committed team. Middle managers, however, whilst keen to develop their skills and expertise, are not

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sufficiently guided as to how best they can make a positive impact on pupils' learning and progress.

Up to about 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all pupils have access to at least good teaching by:
 - providing appropriate levels of challenge and support for all groups of pupils in all lessons, especially for the more-able
 - capitalising on opportunities to assess pupils as they learn, helping them to make the best possible progress in lessons and over time
 - providing consistency in marking so that all pupils are given constructive guidance towards the next steps in their learning
 - ensuring the monitoring of teaching is thorough, focusing on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress in lessons and over time.
- Develop the roles and responsibilities of middle managers by:
 - providing training that will clarify their roles and responsibilities and how these should impact on pupil outcomes
 - increasing their opportunities to monitor and evaluate school priorities and the implementation of initiatives.
- Streamline current monitoring systems to provide instant access to clearly presented information which enables accurate analysis of pupils' progress.
- Raise attendance by employing more inventive and creative approaches to engaging parents and pupils in meeting the school's targets.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' achievement and their enjoyment of learning are satisfactory. Pupils are keen to learn, behave well and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. However, their potential performance is slowed when the tasks set are either too difficult or insufficiently challenging for them. Progress across Years 1 to 6 has been inconsistent and the school's recent response has been swift and impressive in its commitment. Considerable financial and human resources have been invested in providing individual, tailored support intended to meet the diverse needs of a very large proportion of pupils from all significant groups. As a result, many pupils are now making better progress, particularly in writing. However, not all targeted pupils have made such gains and inconsistent teaching quality results in lack of challenge in learning, especially for the more-able. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress, although the focused one-to-one sessions are beginning to demonstrate a more significant impact.

Pupils have a good understanding of safety issues, including cautious use of the Internet. They talk knowledgeably about the benefits of healthy food and exercise and appreciate the wide range of physical activity opportunities provided. Pupils have a keen sense of right and wrong and feel that this is supported effectively by the work of the Playground

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'buddies' and especially, in their words, the 'dinner ladies.' 'They look after you – they listen to different sides of our stories and sort out our problems – they're very good at that!' was a typical pupil comment. Pupils take delight in the opportunities to assume roles of responsibility. They contribute well to the smooth running of the school and are given a voice through the school and eco-councils. Pupils have a tangible sense of ownership in their new school and speak proudly of their contributions to the design and build process, successfully laying the foundations for their place in the new community. Pupils' spiritual and cultural understanding is supported effectively through the multi-cultural and multi-faith diversity of the pupils themselves. They show awareness of and interest in others' feelings, values and beliefs.

Attendance continues to be low, but the school's work to improve this has been relentless. Current figures show significant improvements in overall attendance this year and a downturn in the number of persistent absentees.

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	2
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	4
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?

The majority of lessons are carefully planned and teachers make clear precisely what pupils are expected to learn. Teaching in the initial part of lessons, however, is more often directed towards the whole class rather than towards the specific learning needs of different pupils and some valuable learning time is wasted. The organisation and management of lessons often result in lack of challenge for more-able pupils and also

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missed opportunities for on-going assessment in class to move all pupils' learning forward. Marking of pupils' work celebrates success and gives some pointers for improvement. However, it does not consistently guide pupils towards the next steps in their learning.

Nonetheless, in the better lessons, teachers provide activities designed to grasp pupils' attention, spark their interest, challenge their understanding and ensure learning moves forward at a fairly brisk pace. Teaching assistants are used as an effective further layer of teaching. They are committed to moving targeted pupils' learning forward and make a valuable contribution to pupils' progress.

The curriculum demonstrates an adequate emphasis on English and mathematics and the personal, social and health education programme supports some aspects of pupils' personal development well. Some links are being made between subjects with themed days and weeks bringing pupils' learning to life. However, this aspect of the curriculum is very much in the early stages of development. The teaching of French in Key Stage 2 adds a cultural dimension to pupils' learning that broadens their horizons and pupils enjoy greatly the opportunities to visit places of interest that spark their enthusiasm for learning. The range of additional activities before and after school adds extra interest for pupils and extends their skills.

This is a caring school where pupils feel happy, well looked after and express high levels of trust in adults and each other. They know there is always someone to whom they can take their worries and, importantly, are confident that the support systems work. The school has targeted specific pupils who may be vulnerable due to their circumstances to promote their well-being through intensive pastoral support and accelerate their progress through one-to-one support sessions. Induction and transition arrangements for pupils who are new to the school are a strength of the provision, as are the tailored care and support for pupils who leave the school without notice or for extended periods of time. While these issues present particular difficulties and attendance remains low, steps taken by the school to encourage more regular attendance have been effective and attendance is rising rapidly.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has broadened and strengthened the leadership team to include three assistant headteachers. There is a clear sense of teamwork and a shared vision for improved pupil outcomes. Leaders accept that there is a great deal more to do and their proposals comprise a clear well-focused and well-founded

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school improvement plan. The governing body is supportive and challenging in equal measure and is committed to the school's success.

Improving teaching, tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress and targeting towards closing the gaps in pupils' performance have rightly been key strategies. Teaching is now monitored more frequently. However, not all teachers have been observed and observations are focused more on describing lessons than evaluating the impact that teaching has on pupils' learning and progress. The tracking systems used provide leaders with a wealth of appropriate data. However these are unwieldy and time-consuming and do not enable precise analysis of pupils' progress.

Safeguarding is good and procedures secure the safety of all pupils robustly. Those who leave unexpectedly or are absent for extended periods are monitored and tracked until their safe return to this or another school.

The school works satisfactorily with external partners, parents and carers to promote pupils' well-being and to raise their confidence and self-esteem. The school's promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Pupils' progress is improving, but some pupils, particularly the more-able, are not always challenged sufficiently to reach their potential. All pupils, regardless of their background, feel valued and free from discrimination. This new school is becoming a cohesive community that is making links with groups and building its reputation in the local area. Links beyond the local community are at an early stage of development, but the school has appropriate plans in place to extend its reach to national and global communities. Finances are managed well by the school and monitored by the governing body. Value for money is satisfactory.

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	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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start the nursery with skills and knowledge well below the levels expected for their age, especially in their early language and communication. Good links with parents and carers and improving observation skills are helping staff to build up a clearer picture of children's exact starting points. Despite the considerable challenges many of the children face, they make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development, but their skills in reading, writing and numeracy develop more slowly. As a result, a considerable number of children have not yet reached the expected age-related skills in all areas of learning when they enter Year 1.

Children in the nursery and Reception Year enjoy the welcoming, secure environment and settle quickly, immersing themselves happily in the well-planned, purposeful activities both in and out of doors. Parents and carers are made to feel welcomed and valued and this relationship with adults has a positive impact on children's well-being. Despite limited language skills, children of all backgrounds play together harmoniously and approach visitors confidently to engage them in conversations about their play.

There is a satisfactory mix of adult-directed and child-led activities and an appropriate emphasis on teaching communication, language and literacy skills. Observations and recordings of the children's learning journeys are increasingly detailed and informative.

The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is effective and leaders are aware that there is more work still to be done. Children are well cared for and safeguarding procedures are securely in place, following the school's practice and procedures.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
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	3

Views of parents and carers

The return rate for the parents' and carers' questionnaire was well above the average for primary schools. A very large majority of those who replied are positive in their views about the quality of provision and learning outcomes for their children and with the leadership and management of the school. Most agree that their children enjoy school; that the school keeps their children safe and they are content with the education and care their children receive. Inspection evidence confirms the positive responses which most parents and carers submitted about all aspects of the school's work. However, a very small number of parents and carers feel that the school does not meet their child's particular needs. Inspectors visited lessons, analysed pupils' work and examined the school's assessment data. These showed that progress is satisfactory overall, and for

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some pupils it is good, but there is sometimes insufficient challenge in lessons, particularly for more able pupils.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Irk Valley Community 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 150 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 345 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	92	61	53	35	5	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	84	56	65	43	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	73	49	66	44	8	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	59	39	82	55	8	5	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	78	52	68	45	3	2	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	63	42	76	51	9	6	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	55	37	84	56	5	3	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)	52	35	76	51	3	2	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	58	39	77	51	10	7	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	47	31	92	61	6	4	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	50	33	79	53	6	4	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	78	52	64	43	1	1	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	88	59	59	39	1	1	1	1

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



16 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Irk Valley Community School, Manchester, M8 5XH

Thank you all for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and are very grateful to all of you who chatted to us - we know you are proud to be part of your school. Your school is currently providing you with a satisfactory education. This means that there are some things that your school does well and others that need some improvement.

We found that your school has some important strengths. We were impressed to see how much you respect and care for each other - you behave well and you are so polite and welcoming to visitors. In lessons, you are becoming competent writers. You work very hard, especially when the teachers give you activities to make you think. Those of you who sometimes find learning hard receive a huge amount of extra help and this really works. All the adults who work in your school are determined to make sure it keeps getting better and better.

To help your school to improve even further, we have asked your headteacher to:

- make sure that teaching is at least good and that you make good or better progress in all your lessons
- give those of you who find learning a little easier lots of challenging activities to really test your thinking and to improve how well you do in assessments and tests
- help staff play a greater role in checking how well you are doing
- make the systems for analysing the progress you make more effective
- improve the attendance of pupils who do not come to school regularly enough.

You can help your school by continuing to be the best that you can be and by coming to school every day. Thank you once again for being so kind and friendly – we enjoyed seeing you at work and play!

Yours sincerely,

Eithne Proffitt

Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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