

Alexandra Park Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135746
Local Authority	Stockport
Inspection number	360743
Inspection dates	24–25 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Kevin Johnson

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	369
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Anne Trafford
Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Johnson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 18 lessons and saw 15 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, parents, members of the governing body and teaching staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including national test data and school assessments, school policies and governing body minutes, samples of pupils' current work and documents related to safeguarding. Also taken into account were 140 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as those completed by pupils and staff.

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

- The consistency of pupils' progress throughout the school, particularly for those whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable.
- Whether teaching in Key Stage 2 challenges pupils effectively.
- How well leaders have laid the foundation for an effective school since 2009.

Information about the school

Alexandra Park opened as a primary school in September 2009, following the amalgamation of separate infant and junior schools. A very large majority of pupils are White British in this larger than average school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly in line with that usually found. The school has Healthy School status, Activemark and an Eco-award. Additional care is provided through a breakfast club which is run by school staff.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The impact of the headteacher's leadership and dedicated support from staff and the governing body have quickly established Alexandra Park as a good school. Following an incisive audit of the school's position when it first opened and an accurate evaluation of its needs, there have been significant improvements in key areas of the school's work. The rapid improvement seen in teaching and learning, particularly in Key Stage 2, exceptional care, guidance and support, pupils' good personal outcomes and their rising attainment are ample indicators of leaders' good capacity to sustain improvement.

Children are given a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage from skills on entry which are generally below expectations for their age. Their good progress, especially in personal, social and emotional development, prepares them well for their next stages of learning. Good progress continues throughout the school due to teaching which is consistently good and at times outstanding. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because well-planned, and effective, additional support is carefully matched to what they need to learn. Attainment at the end of Year 6 has improved significantly over the two years of the school's existence and inspection evidence indicates that this is likely to be sustained. Nevertheless, although attainment is currently average, the school recognises that aspects of teaching in English and mathematics could be developed in order to raise attainment further, for example, by increasing the challenges for more-able writers and better application of mathematics skills to problem solving.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Within their overall good personal qualities they make an excellent contribution to school life. They are equally clear about their own and others' safety and say that they feel exceptionally safe in school.

Leaders and managers at every level have collectively taken up the challenge to drive the school forward. They are a cohesive, committed team who clearly see how they are accountable for improvement. They have won the confidence of parents and carers and work effectively with a range of partners to enhance pupils' learning and their own professional development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise attainment in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that more-able pupils are always sufficiently challenged in writing
 - enabling pupils to become more mentally agile in mathematics and to apply mathematics learning in practical ways

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- making pupils more aware of how to improve in both English and mathematics by ensuring that their targets and teachers' marking are consistently clear.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy lessons and learn well because of their good behaviour and attitudes to work. Hard work is expected and they respond well to the challenges provided. They are eager to do well and generally set a good pace for themselves. In one mathematics lesson, for example, they particularly enjoyed the challenge of working in groups to solve problems. The challenge was to use their knowledge of area to estimate the number of 10p coins they could fit on to a table top. This required them to recall earlier learning and apply their skills practically. This level of skills application is an emerging aspect of learning which the school identifies as a way forward towards improved attainment.

Progress is now more rapid and consistent and is at least good in all lessons. This is a direct result of the rapid improvements in teaching and learning. Most pupils attain the levels expected of them at the end of Year 2. School assessments and pupils' current work show that attainment at the end of Year 6 is average in English and mathematics. This is a marked improvement on the previous year, during which strategies were being embedded. Indications are that this trend is likely to continue. Despite the good improvement there is still scope for further challenge in writing, especially for more-able pupils. Pupils achieve well from their varying starting points. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities have carefully tailored learning plans through which their progress is closely monitored. Some of the small group teaching they receive is outstanding.

Pupils are always polite and well-mannered and behave well around the school. They are keen to take on additional responsibilities. The school council is an active group which gives all pupils a voice in school affairs. 'Eco-warriors' conscientiously recycle paper and are watchful guardians over the school's energy consumption. Some older pupils take on the caring roles of buddies and play leaders at break times and even run lunchtime clubs for younger pupils. Pupils show concern about the wider community, for example by raising car-parking issues with the local authority and contributing ideas for improvements to the play area in a local park. They have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Pupils say they feel entirely safe and are fully confident that adults will give them the help they need. They understand issues such as internet safety and cyber-bullying and are adamant that bullying or racist behaviour is not tolerated. Given their above-average attendance, good personal qualities and average attainment, pupils are well prepared to secure future economic well-being.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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?

Teachers' good knowledge of pupils' varying abilities enables them to plan for them well by building on previous learning and thus securing their good progress. Subject knowledge is good and teachers set high expectations in lessons. Well-managed relationships mean that pupils feel valued and work confidently. Teaching assistants are well-informed and their skilful contribution is a valuable asset to pupils' learning. Good use is made in classrooms of electronic whiteboards and other resources. Imaginative approaches used by teachers, such as following Hansel and Gretel's trail 'through the forest to the witches' deliciously decorated gingerbread house', captivate interest and make writing fun. Teachers set termly targets for attainment and check progress towards them regularly. However, there is some inconsistency in the degree to which pupils understand their next steps and in the clarity of teachers' marking to inform them.

Steps are being taken to enhance the satisfactory curriculum by planning more opportunities for pupils to use skills creatively across the range of subjects. There has been some early success in the planning of geography-related topics but this has not embraced all new planning fully. Priorities have been literacy and numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT). The strong focus on these subjects is paying dividends. Pupils' learning and their enjoyment of school are enriched by a good selection of clubs and activities outside of lesson time. Work with different partners benefits pupils who are more gifted and talented, in ICT for example, as well as boosting

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the achievements of pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. There is good guidance for pupils, through the curriculum, about their personal development, safety and well-being.

Parents and carers overwhelmingly endorse pupils' views about the excellent care, guidance and support the school provides.' Supportive, caring and helpful' typically feature in parents' and carers' comments. Many praise the exceptional pastoral support for pupils and families. Very effectively targeted support for potentially vulnerable pupils, through external agencies and designated school staff, has a significantly positive impact on their personal development and achievement. The drive to raise attendance has been successful. Arrangements for pupils joining and leaving the school are very well managed. The vast majority of parents and carers say they are very well-informed about their children's progress and are happy with all that the school provides.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Energetic leadership from the head teacher and determined support from the governing body have created a climate for cohesive teamwork and success. The opening up of professional development opportunities and the resulting sharing of good practice have raised expectations and established a clear vision for the school's future. The leadership and management of teaching and learning are both purposeful and outstanding. Astute appointments, rigorous monitoring and support, the building of expertise and the school's willingness to harness local authority guidance have rapidly boosted the overall quality of lessons. The governing body provides good challenge and support. It is actively engaged in development planning and well-informed about the school's progress. Statutory responsibilities are fulfilled effectively, including the overseeing of safeguarding for which there are good procedures and practice. Systems are continually monitored and updated as required. Information is clear and staff and pupils are aware of their responsibilities. Potential risks are identified and necessary actions taken promptly. Leaders strongly oppose all forms of discrimination and work effectively to maintain the ethos of an inclusive school. Whilst attainment gaps between groups of pupils are closing, leaders are monitoring the progress of more-able pupils to ensure all achieve as well as possible. Community cohesion is promoted satisfactorily. Well-established links with some local schools give pupils opportunities to compare cultural lifestyles but activity beyond the locality of the school, and globally, has not been developed.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures their good progress. Most work securely within the Early Learning Goals by the end of Reception. Children develop personal skills well because teachers expect it of them. They ensure that children are always mindful of others whatever the activity. As a result, children play happily, share equipment and behave well. Independence is also encouraged and, importantly, there are good opportunities for children to choose their own activities and to plan their own play. Indoor and outdoor areas are used well to encourage independence but free choice is restricted by the lack of direct access to the outside area from the classroom. There is a good focus on early development of literacy and numeracy skills. Children make good progress in their learning about letters and sounds because of well-focused teaching, and they approach writing confidently as a result. Provision for children's welfare is excellent. The environment is bright and well equipped and staff have high regard for the well-being of children designated to their care. Relationships with parents and carers are very secure. Provision is managed well by the Early Years Foundation Stage leader. Adults are an effective team, all of whom contribute to the rigorous observation and assessment of children's progress.

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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

A minority of parents and carers returned questionnaires. Almost all of the responses were entirely positive. A very small number expressed concerns, mostly about opportunities for communication with the school. Inspectors found that the systems used for contacting parents are wide-ranging and accessible. These and the small number of other issues were discussed with school leaders while ensuring that parents' and carers' anonymity was protected.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Alexandra Park 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 140 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 369 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	92	66	47	34	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	96	69	44	31	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	68	49	69	49	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	84	60	53	38	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	88	63	49	35	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	76	54	62	44	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	87	62	51	36	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	66	47	64	46	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	78	56	59	42	2	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	74	53	61	44	4	3	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	74	53	58	41	3	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	100	71	38	27	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	96	69	41	29	0	0	0	0

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

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for 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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



26 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Alexandra Park Primary School, Stockport, SK3 9RF

Thank you for the very friendly welcome you gave us when we came to inspect your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you and were pleased to find how proud you are of Alexandra Park and how much of your time you give to making it enjoyable for everyone. We were also impressed by your good manners and behaviour, and your above-average attendance. Those are very important so do keep them up.

Yours is a good school. That is a good achievement in such a relatively short time. You make good progress and achieve well. The standards you reach in English and mathematics are average. They have improved but they could be higher and we have suggested ways for you to achieve that. We found that your lessons are good and that your teachers work hard to make them so. The grown-ups in school take excellent care of you and that is why you feel very safe when you are there.

Your parents and carers think highly of your school and, with teachers and the governing body, would like to see it improve further. In order to make that happen we have asked your school leaders to raise the standards you reach in English and mathematics by making sure that you are always really well challenged in your writing, especially those of you who are more able. Secondly, we have asked them to give you more practice in mental mathematics so you can calculate quickly and also to use your learning to solve practical problems. Finally, we have asked them to make sure that you always know what your targets for learning are and that your teachers' marking clearly shows you how to reach them.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Johnson

Lead Inspector

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