

Alkrington Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105786
Local Authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	366270
Inspection dates	6–7 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Brian Padgett HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	393
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Cath How
Headteacher	Mr Tim Barnes
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Sixteen lessons were observed taught by fifteen teachers. Inspectors held meetings with staff, parents and carers, pupils, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and representatives of the local authority. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including teachers' planning, pupils' workbooks, and policies and procedures related to safeguarding (systems to protect pupils and keep them safe).

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas, principally those stemming from the previous inspection.

- The raising of pupils' standards and progress in English and mathematics.
- The improvement of the quality of teaching and learning, including the assessment of pupils' progress.
- The development of leadership and management, especially in regard to providing a clear direction for school improvement.

Information about the school

Alkington is of above-average size for a primary school. It serves a residential area of Middleton, to the north-east of Manchester. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is about average although the social and economic circumstances of families vary widely. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. However, the ethnic composition of the school is changing slowly, with an increasing proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Nearly all of these pupils have good English, although a small number of pupils enter school with no English at all. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average but the proportion of these pupils with a statement of special educational needs is above average.

The school has been awarded Healthy School status. A childcare provider, Happy Days, is based on-site and runs a before- and after-school club for the community. It is inspected separately by Ofsted. Its inspection report may be found on the Ofsted website under the reference EY274155.

The school was judged to require special measures in October 2010. It received a monitoring inspection by Ofsted inspectors in March 2011, at which time it was found to be making good progress.

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

2

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Alkrington provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. However, it has strengths in teaching and within leadership and management. As a consequence it is improving rapidly. The now stable and unified staff have an appetite to eradicate the remaining legacies of underachievement from the past and they are in a strong position to do so.

Decisive action by the interim executive board following the publication of the previous inspection report in October 2010, supported by the local authority, enabled the school to resolve long-standing issues over leadership and management. The new headteacher has unified and empowered staff at all levels and restored the confidence of staff that they have the skills and knowledge to raise the achievement of pupils. Staff have learned a great deal from the support they have been provided with by the local authority and they are now strong enough to move forward under their own steam. There is good leadership at every level of the school's organisation. Even without a deputy headteacher (appointed but yet to take up her post) the senior management team works very effectively, evaluating and monitoring the work of the school rigorously, and it has the full confidence of staff. A notable feature of this school is that, as well as teachers, teaching assistants and support staff make a powerful contribution to all aspects of school life, including to its leadership through taking lead roles; for example, in developing community cohesion.

During the inspection, teaching in four out of every five lessons was of good or better quality, with several where it was outstanding. Evidence from the local authority and Ofsted monitoring visits to the school suggest that this quality of teaching is now normal within lessons. Teaching in Key Stage 1 is particularly effective. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are vulnerable to underachievement for a range of reasons, including social and/or behavioural, are provided for well. In a trawl of provision for such pupils in Key Stage 1, undertaken at a random point during the inspection, inspectors found that each child identified as having special educational needs was receiving individual or group support from teachers and support staff at that time. The care, support and guidance for pupils are of good quality. This accounts for pupils' good personal development, with the exception of their cultural development, which is not well developed.

Pupils' attainment and overall progress by Year 6, including of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are no better than broadly average and satisfactory. Pupils continue to leave the school less well prepared for secondary school than they might be because of gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. These are the legacies of past inadequacies in the school's provision and they cannot be rectified overnight. Subject leaders are gradually identifying these gaps as they audit their subjects.

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The process of plugging gaps and developing the curriculum to enhance enjoyment and relevance of learning for pupils is just beginning. Years 4 to 6 are most affected.

The school fully recognises the distance it has to go before it becomes a good school. Morale is strong and the school has a clear sense of direction. However, parents and carers are much happier with the school. They believe it has turned itself around already.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in English and mathematics to above average by systematically identifying and rectifying shortfalls in pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding, particularly in Years 4 and 5.
- Develop the curriculum with the aim of making pupils' lessons more relevant to them, relating more to their community and preparing them for the future.
- Improve pupils' cultural development and understanding.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Over time, from broadly average starting points, pupils make satisfactory progress and attain standards that are in the average range and slightly better for English than for mathematics. Their average attainment limits their preparation for their future to satisfactory, despite their experience of enterprise in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress over time. Pupils arriving with little or no English, however, make rapid progress in learning English. There is a much more positive picture to learning in lessons observed, where pupils are now routinely making good progress and enjoying their learning. This suggests that pupils are beginning to make up lost ground.

Pupils' personal development is good. There is real strength in the positive contribution pupils make to the school through the school council, to sustainability and in forging links with others in the local community. As a Healthy School, pupils' awareness of what constitutes a healthy life and the threats to such a life are good. They feel safe, confident in the staff's care of them and in the security the school provides. Parents and carers are clear about their children's increased enjoyment of school and their enthusiasm to talk about what they are doing at school. Behaviour in lessons and around school is good. Pupils with behaviour difficulties are well managed and cared for. Attendance is satisfactory and improving as the school gets to grips with the underlying issues behind poor attendance and the persistent absence of the few.

All aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are strong with the exception of pupils' cultural development, which is not as well developed as it needs to be for them to understand and appreciate the cultural diversity of modern-day England.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

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	2
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?

Growing stability of staff and a willingness to learn from support provided by the local authority has led to a marked improvement in the quality of teaching and of learning. The recent observations of teaching are very positive. A small degree of inconsistency remains but in general, pupils receive a high quality of teaching. There is good planning, so lessons have clear objectives with separate work for pupils at different stages of understanding, to ensure all are challenged. Teachers maintain tight tracking records of pupils' progress, including that of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Marking is good and pupils are increasingly involved in charting their success towards targets. Teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants is often excellent. Teaching assistants play a strong part in teaching and learning in and out of the classroom and lead on interventions when pupils fall behind with the work.

While teaching skill has improved, the curriculum has stood still in most respects. It has not been a focus for improvement and this now shows. It is satisfactory. It is broad and balanced, with a sound emphasis on pastoral subjects, such as sex and relationship education, and good opportunities for enrichment out of lessons. However, as subject leaders start to audit their subjects they find gaps in provision that have passed undetected. To date, little thought has gone into how to make the curriculum distinctive and relevant to pupils, making the most of the town's historical, social, scientific and cultural heritage.

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The care and guidance for pupils are good. This is an inclusive school. It works well with all the agencies involved with pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, with social care and with local health, such as with the school nurse. The transitions to school in the Early Years Foundation Stage and to secondary schools are managed well. The provision for pupils on the special needs register is improving as individual education plans are developed to more closely reflect the pupils' learning needs.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The improvements in leadership and management recorded in the monitoring visits by the local authority and Ofsted mark the renaissance of the school. The new headteacher's approach of team building and collegiate decision-making has been vindicated. The confidence and morale of staff is restored. Staffing instability is much reduced. Staff are keen to tackle the remaining inconsistencies and legacies of underachievement from the past and have developed the necessary skills and organisation to do so. A sharp distinction from just a few months ago is that it is the school that is driving development now, not external agencies. The interim executive board and the senior management team are rigorous in their monitoring and evaluation of performance, and they support and challenge staff and each other well. Improvements are underpinned by rigorous analysis of their impact. The local authority has brokered a wide range of support for the school, all of which has proved helpful. The local authority and the interim executive board are beginning to adapt their work with the school to reflect its changed circumstances.

With the exception of the partnership working of the school with its parents and other professional partners, which are good, most of the other aspects of leadership and management are satisfactory. This is because the leadership has been focused on dealing with the issues that placed it in a category of concern. Arrangements for safeguarding are sound and the school's promotion of equal opportunities and tackling discrimination is satisfactory. Pupils feel safe and no group is disadvantaged beyond any other. The promotion of community cohesion has many positive features but much is new. Leaders and managers are fully aware of what areas have not been developed and what needs doing as priorities change. The school now provides satisfactory value for money.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

The effectiveness of the school's Nursery and Reception classes has been a strength through the school's more troubled times. This remains the situation although, at present, most of the strengths in the Early Years Foundation Stage are to be found within the Nursery class. From very varied beginnings, children make good progress, with an emphasis on developing their communication, including early reading and writing skills, and settling them into school life. Children enjoy Nursery and Reception. Their play is purposeful. They concentrate well and cooperate with each other. The partnership with parents is strong and transitions, for example from Nursery to Reception and into Year 1, are managed very well. Provision is of good quality. There is a clear recognition of the importance of pupils learning outdoors. The outside environment in the Nursery is very well developed and planned improvements to the Reception area are well-advanced. Teachers' planning is frequently modified as a result of assessments and to take account of children's interests and enthusiasms. The latter was well illustrated when a planned topic on plants in the Nursery was converted to one on minibeasts in response to the children's interest in the creatures they discovered living amongst the plants. On occasion, in an attempt to accelerate children's progress in mathematics in Reception, too much is expected of children's understanding of abstract ideas. Teachers are effective in the early identification of learning difficulties and provide well for the increasing proportion of children from minority ethnic groups, including those with little English on arrival. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed and there is a good level of awareness of strengths and also what is required to meet emerging challenges.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

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

Questionnaires for parents and carers are not normally distributed by Ofsted for special measures monitoring inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

Parents and carers interviewed formally and informally during the inspection spoke very positively about the recent changes in the school. They believed their children enjoyed school more and were becoming keener learners. They had faith in the headteacher and appreciated the improved communication between school and home.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

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.



11 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Alkrington Primary School, Manchester, M24 1JZ

You may remember when inspectors visited your school recently, two weeks before school closed for the summer holidays. We came to see how well you were learning and if the school was continuing to improve. I am writing to you to tell you what we found. We spoke to many of you during the visit and I would like to thank those pupils for their contribution.

In October 2010, inspectors judged that your school was not providing you with the education you deserve. I am pleased to tell you this is no longer the case. Alkrington now provides you with a satisfactory education, and what is more, it is well on its way to becoming a good school. It no longer requires special help or for inspectors from Ofsted to visit regularly. We are sure of this because the teaching you receive is nearly all good and some is outstanding, and the school is now better led than it has been in the past. Your teachers and teaching assistants are much happier than they were last year and this shows. They have really worked hard and as you know, when you work well together, as a team, you can achieve anything!

I do not want you to think this is 'job done' though. The school has a lot to do to become good. Those of you in the top half of the school have gaps in your skills, knowledge and understanding from when your education was not so good. Finding and plugging those gaps will not be easy but will be very important if you are to get a good start in secondary school. A number of things the school would have got on with in normal circumstances were put on the shelf while it sorted out the most pressing problems. Making the work you do, what is called the curriculum, as relevant and exciting as possible was one part of the school's work that was put on the shelf. Now is the time to develop the curriculum. It is also time you learned more about the different cultures in modern-day England.

Coming out of special measures is a milestone to celebrate. Of course, your teachers and teaching assistants need you to continue to work hard, behave well and play a full part in school life. Some of you, including the school council, the eco team and the community cohesion ambassadors are already doing your school proud. On behalf of the inspection team, best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Brian Padgett

Her Majesty's Inspector

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