

Varna Street Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105459
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	377245
Inspection dates	7–8 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Tony Painter

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	283
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Dwan
Headteacher	Bernard Madden
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors who observed teaching and learning in all classes; 20 lessons taught by 11 teachers. Inspectors held discussions with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of school documents including safeguarding and other policies, along with planning and assessment records. They examined questionnaire responses from staff and pupils as well as 67 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

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

- How consistent is pupils' progress throughout the school?
- Does teaching ensure at least good progress in most lessons?
- Has the school maintained high-quality provision and outcomes for pupils' personal development?
- Have actions to widen leadership been effective in allowing staff to make a greater contribution to improving provision?

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school with around a third of its pupils from White British backgrounds. A further third have African backgrounds, while the rest have a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language is well above that found in schools nationally with many at an early stage of learning English. A high proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, at 39%, is high.

Well-above average numbers of pupils join and leave the school other than at the usual times during each school year. In addition, the school has substantially increased entry numbers during the past two years in preparation for a scheduled move into new premises in June 2012. The school has a number of awards that include Healthy School status, Activemark and the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school. Staff work together extremely effectively to create an outstandingly positive and caring atmosphere. They have a clear commitment to senior leaders' very determined vision for improving the quality of provision and further raising attainment. Self-evaluation is detailed and has led to highly appropriate actions in the right areas of development to maintain high-quality teaching. This ensures pupils' outstanding overall progress from generally very low starting points to broadly average attainment by the end of Year 6.

Pupils of all backgrounds and abilities achieve equally well. Consistently strong features of teaching, such as excellent relationships and organisation, ensure an extremely effective pace to learning. Teachers plan work well for pupils of different abilities, leading to effective learning. Strong teamwork with teaching assistants ensures supported pupils make as good a rate of progress as other pupils.

Highly effective provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage lays a secure foundation for children's learning and personal development. Throughout the school, detailed assessments give a clear and accurate picture of how well pupils are doing. Thorough analysis of this information ensures extremely effective targeted support for pupils with special educational needs. Support for pupils who speak English as an additional language is carefully matched to their levels of language acquisition to enable fast gains in confidence and facility. The many pupils who join the school at different points in their school careers, often with very limited prior experiences, get careful support so they frequently make very rapid progress. Staff set challenging targets for all pupils, although the systems for tracking and checking on progress of pupils in Key Stage 2 are not as sharp as those for younger pupils, where progress is fastest.

Senior leaders' regular monitoring gives a clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Successful new strategies are strengthening middle leaders' roles and creating a cohesive team approach. Well-judged actions to improve provision show clear positive results. The success of the current developments indicates outstanding capacity to improve further. The highly supportive governing body has a very good understanding of the school and its place in the local community.

Outstanding care, guidance and support for pupils and a shared commitment to the needs of each individual child remain clear strengths of the school. There is a very

strong sense of community in the school and pupils of different backgrounds mix readily and extremely cohesively. Outstanding partnerships with a wide range of agencies and outside bodies ensure effective support for those pupils and their families who, due to their circumstances, are potentially vulnerable. Pupils' exemplary behaviour, high levels of enthusiasm and their desire to do well reflect the success of the school's highly positive atmosphere.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Refine Key Stage 2 assessment tracking and monitoring systems to show with greater clarity how pupils are making progress towards challenging targets.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils throughout the school show great enjoyment of their lessons and achieve well. Their exemplary behaviour and very positive attitudes contribute extremely well to their learning. Pupils concentrate very well and are keen to give answers to teachers' questioning in lessons. They respond well to the consistent classroom routines and work at tasks conscientiously, showing much pride in their work. Pupils enjoy opportunities to apply their rapidly improving basic skills in a wide range of activities. Throughout the school, for example, they show confidence in using information and communication technology (ICT) skills when researching topics. Pupils willingly rise to greater challenge in lessons, such as the Year 4 pupils who showed extremely good thinking, listening and speaking skills when considering how changes in bone cells might affect people as they age.

Careful monitoring of pupils' progress ensures there are no significant differences in the progress made by different groups. Those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive well-targeted additional support which ensures they make very good progress and brings their attainment closer to that of their peers. In a similar way, pupils at an early stage of learning English very quickly gain the confidence needed to play a full role in lessons and learning is frequently rapid.

Pupils are highly confident of their safety at school and know what to do to reduce risk, for example when using the internet. Although they say bullying does not occur, they have total confidence in staff to deal with any possible incidents. Pupils know how to eat healthily and most take a keen part in sports activities. They are proud to take responsibilities, such as the various roles they fulfil around school and the actions they take to support others. They show a very positive regard for each other and all mix extremely well, exemplifying their strong awareness and respect for different cultures and backgrounds. They enthusiastically take the opportunities to reflect on their values and those of others. This extremely good personal development and their high attendance ensure outstanding preparation for the next stages of their learning.

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	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is outstanding, so pupils learn extremely well and make outstanding overall progress. There is a great deal of consistency in teaching throughout the school. Teachers' high expectations, praise and effective control where needed motivate pupils and ensure they behave very well, forming the foundation of well-paced learning. Lessons benefit from strategies such as identifying learning outcomes and ways to identify success, which are firmly and successfully embedded features of teachers' detailed planning.

Assessment systems give teachers detailed and accurate information about how well pupils are doing. Most pupils know their targets and are aware of ways to improve; teachers draw on assessments when planning work for different ability groups. They frequently check how well pupils are learning and adjust their planning for the next lessons based on past progress. The school uses assessment information extremely effectively to provide a wide and comprehensive range of support classes and interventions, tailored to the specific needs of groups of pupils. Outcomes from these interventions are frequently of the highest quality and contribute significantly to closing gaps in attainment and the overall outstanding achievement. Very strong partnerships between support staff and teachers are extremely effective in promoting the learning for pupils such as those identified as in danger of falling behind.

The outstanding curriculum is particularly effective in engaging pupils and motivating them to learn and pupils respond enthusiastically. Strategies to develop basic skills within other subjects are proving successful and pupils show strongly developing ICT skills. Staff's deep understanding of children's needs have enabled them to provide high-quality personalised learning for the large majority of pupils. For example, very effective assessment of pupils joining the school during the school year enables teachers to provide extremely well-focused support and intervention and promote rapid progress for these pupils. Strong partnerships contribute to the very wide range of well-attended clubs and enrichment activities. Regular homework gives

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

parents and carers effective opportunities to be involved in their children’s learning and extends the strong home/school links.

The strengths of the school’s outstanding care, guidance and support lie in the deep personal knowledge that staff have of each individual pupil. This establishes a strong ethos of care and a highly supportive community atmosphere that encourage pupils’ self-esteem, personal development and confidence. Very strong positive relationships at all levels ensure a warm and welcoming community in which those pupils and families whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable have confidence in the school’s ability to support them. Support makes good use of well-established partnerships; actions are closely tracked and frequently extremely effective.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school’s accurate and detailed monitoring of teaching ensures high-quality self-evaluation, which identifies the right areas for development. Senior leaders have successfully conveyed a clear vision for the school to maintain and improve on its positive qualities. Well-directed training gives staff the additional skills they need to put new strategies into place, for example in the current focus on closing gaps in pupils’ achievements. The school has taken very effective steps to improve the quality and use of assessment throughout the school. As a result, there is very clear and accurate information about how well all pupils are doing that is used to set challenging targets based on pupils making progress above the nationally expected rates. Regular reviews hold teachers accountable and successfully support the drive for continuous improvement. However, current systems in Key Stage 2 do not always identify opportunities to further extend some pupils’ progress.

The headteacher has successfully established new management systems which give subject coordinators greater leadership roles and further opportunities for staff at all levels to contribute to improvement. Monitoring responsibilities are being distributed more widely and staff show enthusiasm for their part in taking improvements to the next level. The governing body has strong links with the school and has detailed knowledge of its current priorities. It has involved itself well in the preparation for the new school building. The governing body has very well-developed systems to review and improve child protection, risk-assessment and other safety procedures. These ensure that the outstanding safeguarding arrangements fully meet statutory requirements.

A very wide range of strong partnerships enhance and extend the school’s provision. In particular, outside agencies contribute very well to widening the curriculum and supporting pupils’ personal development. The highly effective breakfast club, for example, caters for around a third of the pupils and is subsidised by a local business.

The school very effectively promotes community cohesion from a first-class understanding of its own context. As a result, incidents of racism are extremely rare and pupils of different backgrounds work and play exceptionally harmoniously together. There are outstanding measures to analyse the achievement of groups and individual pupils and to act on the findings to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination. As a result, a number of pupils have had much improved access to education and made outstanding strides in overcoming disadvantages.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

This setting is highly effective and meets children's needs exceptionally well because outstanding leadership ensures a strong team approach to high quality provision. Planning, organisation, communications, relationships and safeguarding are all exemplary.

Early baseline assessment and close links with parents and carers ensure staff know each child individually and plan activities accordingly. Support and encouragement from staff quickly build a very strong positive ethos and children settle quickly into the clearly established daily routines. They soon begin to show improved confidence and greater initiative in the ways they choose to carry out their activities. They behave well and show respect for adults and the other children.

There is a highly effective balance between quiet and calm activities, energetic exercise, independence and steered tasks. Indoor and outdoor areas are used very well despite the age of the building and the attendant limitations to the areas. Key workers know when to intervene and when to hold back, successfully encouraging children's independence. The teaching of early number and language skills is particularly effective; it is carefully matched to each child's needs and ensures optimum progress.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	1
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
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Views of parents and carers

At around 23%, the response rate to the inspection questionnaires is below the average found in primary schools. Most responses gave wholly positive views of their children's experiences. There was particularly high support for children's enjoyment of school and the promotion of healthy lifestyles as well as good teaching and effective leadership and management. The inspection findings support these views. Inspectors thoroughly investigated all the general matters raised in the very small number of negative views expressed and their findings are included in the report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Varna Street 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 67 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 286 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	49	73	16	24	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	43	64	22	33	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	38	57	25	37	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	40	60	25	37	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	38	57	27	40	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	55	25	37	1	1	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	54	29	43	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)	30	45	28	42	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	42	34	51	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	54	26	39	1	1	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	37	35	52	3	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	34	51	30	45	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	44	66	19	28	1	1	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.



9 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Varna Street Primary School, Manchester, M11 1WP

I would like to thank you all for making the inspectors so welcome when we came to your school. Special thanks must go to those of you who gave up time to talk to us about your work and how you enjoy school. You were all very sure that your school is really helping you to learn well and we certainly agree. You all work extremely hard in school and are rightly proud of what you achieve. Most of you know just what you need to do to get even better. Your behaviour is first class and you all get on really well with each other.

Yours is an outstanding school. The headteacher, all the staff and the governing body are extremely good at making sure that you are safe and very well cared for. We can see that all of the staff have worked hard to help you learn better and it is proving successful. We saw how much you enjoy your lessons and how keen you are to learn. It is no wonder that all of you, including the youngest children, are making outstanding progress.

One reason for our visit was to see if we can help your school to improve further and we have identified one thing. We have asked your school leaders to make some changes to the way they check how well the older pupils are doing so that there is no chance of anyone falling behind the rapid progress that pupils in this school usually make.

I hope that you will help by continuing to do your very best in all you do.

Yours sincerely

Tony Painter
Lead inspector

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