

Lower Kersal Community Primary School

St Aidan's Grove, Salford, Greater Manchester, M7 3TN

Inspection dates 23–24 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement.

- Achievement and the quality of teaching vary across the school with pupils making good progress in some classes and weaker progress in others.
- Standards in subjects other than English and mathematics are generally weak.
- The weak teaching of sounds to form letters in the majority of classes in the lower school, results in reading skills remaining below those expected nationally.
- Leadership of subjects other than English and mathematics is weak.
- Classroom assistants are being used ineffectively in too many lessons.
- Governors have had limited impact in helping to improve the school and do not effectively challenge management and teachers about their work.
- Higher ability pupils are not always provided with sufficient challenge to enable them to succeed.

The school has the following strengths

- Standards in English and mathematics are rising.
- Consistently good teaching is found in Year 2 and Year 6 where pupils make best progress.
- Pupils enjoy school, are appreciative of the improvements being made and behave well.
- The headteacher provides clear leadership and direction and has changed the culture of the school so that there is now a more positive climate for learning.
- Relationships between home and school are positive and have improved.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed all the teachers in the school. In total, 16 lessons were observed. Four were joint observations with the headteacher, who was also observed reporting back to teachers on the quality of their teaching.
- The inspectors spoke to members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, as well as staff and pupils. They also heard pupils read and talked to them about their reading habits. Health and safety issues were also discussed with pupils. In addition, informal discussions were held with pupils around the school.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a range of evidence, including the work pupils were doing in class. A range of documents was also looked at, including information relating to additional government funding (pupil premium), teachers' performance, safeguarding, minutes of governing body meetings, the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, monitoring of teaching records and the tracking of pupils' progress.
- The inspectors also received four responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, completed by parents. They also considered the parental responses in the school's own survey.

Inspection team

Leszek Iwaskow, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Julie Webster

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized school serving an urban area, close to Salford city centre.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is high.
- The percentage of pupils with special educational and other learning needs are above average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. Around a quarter is from minority ethnic backgrounds and this proportion is slowly growing.
- A total of 14 different languages are spoken in the school and 22% of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The incidence of pupils entering or leaving the school part-way through their education is higher than that seen nationally.
- There have been a large number of staffing changes in the last couple of years. Currently, there are a large proportion of relatively inexperienced and newly qualified teachers in the school.
- Among several accreditations, the school holds the Leading Parent Partnership award, Eco Schools Green Flag Award, International Award, and Quality Mark – basic skills Award.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop high quality leadership across all subjects by:
 - making sure that all staff have the opportunity to manage and develop a subject, or area of responsibility, as part of their ongoing professional development
 - providing opportunities for subject leaders to develop their expertise in order to manage their subject, or area of responsibility, effectively and be able to support colleagues in developing better classroom practice
 - improving the quality of subject monitoring and planning to ensure that good quality lessons are delivered in all subjects in order to improve standards and the progress pupils make
 - ensuring that all subject leaders are held accountable for improvements in their area of responsibility.
- Ensure that governors are more involved in the life of the school and hold management and teachers to account by:
 - developing the skills of the governing body to understand pupil performance data
 - becoming more familiar with what constitutes good teaching
 - undertaking an external review of governance.
- Improve teaching so that it is consistently at least good across the school by:
 - ensuring that planning of units of work and lessons is rigorous and focuses on developing pupils' subject knowledge and skills
 - providing greater challenge in the tasks set, especially for the more able pupils
 - improving teachers' subject knowledge
 - making more effective use of the support provided by classroom assistants in lessons
 - improving the teaching of sounds to form letters in the lower school in order to bring about quicker improvements in reading at an early age.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement is inconsistent across the school with pupils making good progress in some classes and weaker progress in others. Standards in subjects other than English and mathematics are generally weak
- English and mathematics have benefited from the headteacher's personal intervention and support from his most effective teachers. This has led to recent clear improvements in writing in literacy lessons but not across other subjects.
- In the past, pupils have left school with poor writing and numeracy skills. However, standards are now improving and last summer's results were the best for a long time. The school sensibly prioritised talk, reading and writing and nearly all the pupils made expected progress. However, the number of pupils attaining higher levels remains below the national average.
- The performance of different groups of pupils can vary from year to year. Boys have recently outperformed girls contrary to the national trend, and pupils who speak English as an additional language generally attain higher than others in their class. Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve in line with other groups.
- Pupil-premium funding has been used effectively to support many underperforming pupils and has raised standards for these pupils faster than previously. The performance of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is frequently in line with, and sometimes above, that of their classmates.
- Children often enter the Nursery or Reception class with reading, writing, physical and personal development skills which are well below those expected for their age. The introduction of routines and the stimulus of the resources available support their personal development well and most make good progress despite some remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.
- Pupils generally read better than they write. Pupils enjoy reading and are encouraged to do so at home. However, their reading skills get off to a slow start in Key Stage 1 and very often remain below those expected nationally because the teaching of sounds to form letters is not consistently good and errors are not always corrected.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although some good and outstanding teaching was observed by inspectors, too much teaching was bland and failed to enthuse or challenge pupils, especially the most able. The best teaching was observed in Year 2 and Year 6.
- There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across classes and subjects. Teaching of literacy and numeracy is better planned and delivered than other subjects. Teachers have had regular training and are clearer about what they are doing and what they expect pupils to learn. As a result pupils' work is usually of a reasonable standard and often good.
- Teachers are less secure in other subjects. Their planning is weak and often focuses on a shallow coverage of a topic rather than a clear understanding of what skills and knowledge need to be developed. As a result pupils may experience enjoyable activities such as tasting food from different countries, which do little to support their learning about these places, or they are occupied with simple worksheets and inappropriate tasks such as colouring in or cutting out.
- Good teachers create an atmosphere for learning. In an outstanding literacy lesson the personality of the teacher shone through with the way her voice rose and fell as she built up the atmosphere to encourage writing about a haunted house. Rather than accept the mundane she continually dared the class to use Year 6 words, even though these pupils were in Key Stage 1. High quality work was produced as pupils rose to the challenge.

- In other successful lessons, good open-ended questioning encouraged detailed, articulate and refined responses. There was a clarity in the teacher demonstration so that all pupils understood what was expected of them. This provided them with clear ideas they could develop. For example, in a lesson where they had to write an effective description of a crime scene, skilful questioning made use of their five senses to bring the scene to life and provide a platform for their writing.
- In too many lessons pupils make slow progress because they are passive recipients of overlong teacher talk which does not stimulate or interest them. Basic classroom management techniques are sometimes ignored. For example, ensuring that fidgety boys are moved to the front of the carpet rather than allowing them to lose concentration at the back.
- There is variation in the quality of marking and feedback to pupils. Usually, literacy work is marked best with pupils' attention drawn to spelling, punctuation or grammatical errors. In other subjects, work is often ticked and praise is given with little indication provided of how the work could be improved.
- Classroom assistants provide the best support for pupils when working with small groups or though one-to-one tuition. They are used less effectively in lessons because they often do not have a clearly defined role, are passive observers while the teacher questions or demonstrates and generally work with lower ability groups who would benefit from more frequent teacher contact.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are extremely positive about the behaviour around the school and the improvements initiated by the headteacher. They feel safe and secure. Older pupils undertake responsibilities at lunchtime to help and support the youngest in the school especially in the canteen. As one pupil stated, 'We are one happy family – this is our second home.'
- Good procedures are in place to establish early intervention for those pupils who are falling behind in their work. This enables good individual support to be provided for pupils with specific learning needs.
- There is a positive climate for learning. Pupils want to learn and, even in lessons which are less demanding, work hard to complete the task set by their teacher. They enjoy receiving prizes for good work and behaviour.
- Pupils socialise well and are respectful of one another. They were adamant that bullying of any kind is not an issue since, 'everyone is a friend'. Parents showed no concerns about behaviour and safety
- Punctuality is good and attendance is in line with the national average. However, unauthorised absence is well above the national average due to some parents taking their children on extended holidays in term time. These pupils fall behind in their learning.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher has worked hard to change the culture of the school and has made a big difference in improving the behaviour and attitudes of the pupils. Changing more entrenched and weaker practice in classrooms has proved to be more difficult but is beginning to happen.
- The headteacher provides strong leadership that is focussed squarely on improving pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. His evaluation of strengths and weaknesses in the school is accurate and his plans to speed up improvements are realistic but have been hampered by frequent changes of staff in some classes.
- Weaknesses in teaching are being identified through regular and rigorous monitoring. This has led to clear targets for each teacher, which are now linked more closely to salary progression and specific expectations regarding improvements in their classroom performance. These have not been in place long enough to be able to judge their impact. Better teachers have been rewarded with promotion linked to greater responsibility.

- The best teachers have been strategically placed in Years 2 and 6 to ensure maximum impact to enable the school, in the short-term, to counter weaker teaching in other classes.
- Since the last inspection, there has been a strong emphasis on the teaching of mathematics and especially English. These subjects benefited from the headteacher's personal intervention alongside support from his most effective teachers. This has led to recent improvements in writing in literacy lessons, but not always across other subjects.
- Subject leadership elsewhere is weak. Senior leaders have not given sufficient emphasis to developing the skills of subject leaders; nor have they held them sufficiently to account for pupils' progress. The focus on improving literacy and numeracy standards has led to the school losing some of its focus on other subjects. As a result standards and quality of work in these areas are inconsistent and sometimes poor.
- An array of visits, visitors and trips to places in the locality, as well as residential visits further afield all add to pupils' enjoyment and to their spiritual, moral and social development. All the diverse cultures in the school are valued and celebrated and discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- Tracking of pupils and the progress they are making has improved. Those who are at risk of not doing well or falling behind in their work in literacy and mathematics are identified at an early stage and receive additional support as required. This has helped to raise standards recently.
- The school receives a large amount of extra funding through the pupil premium grant and this is being used effectively to support target pupils through a range of strategies such as speech and language therapy, study support for pupils in Years 5 and 6, additional classroom help as well as educational visits. A mathematics development programme has also been introduced in Years 4 and 5 to encourage more focused support as required.
- Relationships between home and school are positive and have improved. Parents are welcomed as they drop their children off in the morning or pick them up at night. They are kept informed monthly about school activities and successes through a well produced and colourful newsletter as well as a school blog on the internet. Every term, there are well attended regular parent drop-ins, workshops and special assemblies.
- The local authority has faith in the leadership and ability of the headteacher but has been limited in the support it has been able to offer beyond literacy and numeracy or specialist support for those pupils with specific learning difficulties. As a result the school is beginning to work in partnership with a group of local schools to share skills, training and exchange ideas to support improvements in the classroom.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have had a limited impact on the changes that the school is grappling with at present. Although they have increased their involvement with the school over the past year, collectively they have not shown they have sufficient knowledge and skills to fully understand pupil performance data and what constitutes good teaching in order to effectively challenge management and teachers about their performance. They are kept well informed about what is going on in the school and are aware of their duty to ensure that resources are allocated appropriately and that pupils are well cared for. They have been supportive of the efforts of the headteacher to change the culture of the school and raise standards. However, the lack of shared accountability to speed up improvement has placed too much responsibility on the shoulders of the headteacher and key teachers in the school.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105886
Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	400806

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	231
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ellis Barnett
Headteacher	Mr Lee Ashton
Date of previous school inspection	13 July 2010
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