

Mather Street Primary School

Mather Street, Failsworth, Manchester, M35 0DT

Inspection dates 24–25 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. It is not good because

- Not all teaching is strong enough across the school to ensure that all pupils make as much progress as possible.
- Pupils are not consistently provided with enough opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Some teachers talk for too long and, as a result, teaching assistants are waiting to support groups or individual pupils. Moreover, pupils do not spend enough time engaged in independent learning or problem-solving activities.
- Teachers do not always provide pupils with clear enough guidance on how to improve their work. As a result, pupils do not aim high enough and presentation is often untidy.
- Some middle leaders are not skilled enough in their areas of responsibility to enable them to support other staff or improve the quality of learning and teaching.
- The governing body does not rigorously check the work of the school or ensure that the quality of teaching and achievement of pupils are good enough.

The school has the following strengths

- The very recently introduced federated leadership team, under the highly skilled direction of the executive headteacher, has quickly gained an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Decisive steps have been taken to bring about improvements in teaching, build a strong atmosphere and ensure all staff share the vision and drive for school improvement. However, the full impact of this is yet to be seen.
- Reading is taught well, pupils are encouraged to enjoy books and standards are improving, particularly for more-able pupils.
- Pupils feel safe and well cared for. They have a positive attitude towards learning. Mather Street pupils ensure that visitors feel welcome and are friendly and polite around the school.
- Working within the federation helps sharing of good practice and supports staff development, particularly for newly and recently qualified staff.
- Following transition to federation status, the governing body is careful to ensure that the school remains at the heart of the local community.
- Procedures to reduce absence have taken effect and attendance is now above average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons. Two observations were carried out with the executive headteacher and deputy executive headteacher of the federation of schools. In addition, the inspection team made a number of short visits to lessons and listened to pupils read.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, staff, the federation leadership team including the executive headteacher, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of three responses to the on-line questionnaire, Parent View, a letter from a parent and the results of a previous questionnaire distributed by the school to parents.
- They observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, planning and monitoring information, minutes of the governing body meetings and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Louise Murphy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Chris Maloney

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Mather Street is a smaller than average primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for extra government funding through the 'pupil premium' is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils needing extra help is well above average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- In September 2012, the school federated with Yew Tree Community School. A new executive headteacher and federated leadership team, including head of school, are in post.
- Members of the federation leadership team have previously been used by the local authority to provide support for other schools in the area.
- 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?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of, and support for, all pupils
 - ensuring that pupils are always fully aware of how to improve their work
 - making sure that teaching assistants contribute to best effect throughout the whole lesson.
- Ensure that every teacher contributes to raising pupils' achievement by:
 - strengthening the accuracy and use of assessment information so that work is always well matched to the learning needs of all pupils
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to practise English and mathematical skills in other subjects
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to undertake investigations and solve problems by working on their own or in groups.
- Improve the effectiveness of some aspects of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that all staff rigorously follow the new systems and adopt the clear vision for improvement set by the federation leadership team
 - developing the skills of the governing body so that it can challenge school leaders effectively and contribute further to school improvement
 - ensuring that all middle leaders understand how to bring about improvements in their areas of responsibility.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children enter the school with skills and abilities that are well below those expected for their age. They settle into the warm, caring environment where learning activities are planned to appeal to the interests of all children. For example, the nursery class developed a sensory area because staff recognised how feeling different materials stimulated conversation and learning within the class. Children are well supported to develop their range of social skills. They make good progress in linking letters and the sounds they make which provides a firm foundation from which to develop reading skills. However, progress is not as rapid in other areas of learning and pupils enter Key Stage 1 with skills that are overall below expected levels.
- The standards reached by pupils by the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 vary year-on-year in English and mathematics but is broadly average. From their relatively low starting points pupils achieve well overall. However, progress is inconsistent across the school because lesson planning is not based on accurate assessment and the quality of teaching is not always good.
- Pupils who receive additional funding and those with special educational needs reach higher standards than similar pupils nationally, but lower standards than others at the school. The new federation leadership team has altered the way in which support is provided for these pupils but it is too early to assess what impact this has had. The progress made by individuals and groups of pupils is currently difficult to determine because of the ad hoc assessment procedures previously used at the school. The new leadership team has very quickly introduced an assessment system to track pupil progress and begun a programme of staff training to ensure that accurate, systematic assessment techniques are consistently used.
- Pupils are not always given enough opportunities to use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. Moreover, teachers sometimes talk for too long, which does not leave enough time for pupils to work things out for themselves and develop their ability to learn independently.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Federating is providing a range of opportunities for teachers to develop their practice. Teachers early in their career are now routinely supported to develop planning and assessment skills. There are strengths in the quality of teaching. For example, during one good lesson the teacher had high expectations of the class. She quickly assessed pupils' abilities and used her good subject knowledge to alter the planned activities to ensure that they met pupils' needs.
- When observing teaching the new leadership team recognised that reading was not being taught systematically across the school. Since September, daily opportunities for all pupils to practise and develop their reading skills have been introduced. This has had a positive impact on pupils' enjoyment and reading skills. During one guided reading session in Year 2 it was evident that pupils loved sharing their books with friends.
- During lessons teachers are very positive and use praise to motivate pupils and encourage them to try harder. However, marking in books is less helpful. Pupils are not aware of their learning targets. This means that they do not always know how to improve their work.
- Some teaching assistants are highly skilled at delivering planned activities, such as when working with groups of pupils to link letters and the sounds that they make. However, there are too many occasions when they are waiting for teachers to finish their overly long lesson introduction. This results in missed learning opportunities for some pupils.
- In 2011, pupils with special educational needs made good progress in their learning.
- Teachers have excellent relationships with pupils who are comfortable to ask for support when they need it. They talk with partners to discuss how to answer questions and share their ideas. Speaking and listening opportunities are increasing for pupils, but currently not all staff model appropriate spoken English.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils have a very positive attitude toward learning, though some believe lessons are too easy.
- Behaviour is good in and around the school. When pupils become distracted during lessons a gentle reminder from staff is enough to bring them back on task. One child commented: 'You have to be good, because with two headteachers you could get into twice as much trouble.'
- Pupils enjoy coming to school, as is shown by their improved attendance and punctuality.
- Pupils feel safe at school. They and have a good understanding of all forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and are unanimous in their view that if there were any bullying in school it would be dealt with quickly and appropriately by adults.
- The before-school club is highly valued by the pupils. They believe it gives them a good start to the day because it gives them the chance to play with their friends and encourages them to arrive early.
- There are limited opportunities for pupils to take up responsibilities in school. However, when they do, pupils are proud of their achievements, for example when older pupils help with Early Years Foundation Station children and when they are elected to the school council.
- There were few responses from parents and carers to questionnaires distributed by the school or on-line. However, most of the parents who did respond were supportive of the school and felt that their children were happy at school and kept safe.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The executive headteacher is a strong leader with high aspirations for the school. She is very well supported by the federation senior leadership team which includes the head of school at Mather Street. The speed with which the team has produced an accurate self-evaluation, identified priorities for the school, set about implementing them and been able to assess impact shows that secure capacity to improve.
- Teachers' performance is currently being reviewed by senior leaders. A programme of professional development that fits with school priorities has already begun to have a positive impact, for example in the learning and teaching of reading.
- Not all middle leaders are sufficiently skilled to improve the quality of learning and teaching in their subjects and areas of responsibility. The senior team has arranged for staff from the partner school to coach and support middle leaders to improve their skills but it is too early to assess the impact of this collaboration.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well through the subjects taught. Pupils are given opportunities to reflect on learning and attitudes both in class and during assemblies. After-school activities provide a range of sporting and musical experiences which pupils enjoy.
- Additional 'pupil premium' funding had been allocated prior to the federation leadership team taking up post. It has been used largely to fund staffing costs and curriculum enrichment activities, such as educational visits and opportunities for pupils to be taught to play a musical instrument. In 2011, data showed that pupils eligible for this grant were making better progress than other pupils in school. The new head of school is highly skilled in assessment techniques and is implementing new systematic procedures to track and record the progress of all pupils.
- The local authority has a record of providing support for the school. However, this has had little impact as strategies and interventions suggested were not implemented well enough. The support is set to continue as demonstrated by the key role played by the authority in facilitating federation status with a school judged to be outstanding.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The new governing body, in place since September 2012 is an amalgamation of the previous

governing bodies of the two federated schools. The governing body is supportive of the headteacher and staff but does not always challenge school leaders effectively because some do not yet have the skills required to enable them to do so. Governors are, however, determined to keep the school at the heart of the local community and eager to engage in training that will provide them with relevant skills to support improving standards at 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	105649
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	405005

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	187
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Samantha Gibson
Headteacher	Martine Buckley
Date of previous school inspection	12 October 2012
Telephone number	0161 770 3266
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