

Mersey Drive Community Primary School

Mersey Drive, Whitefield, Manchester, M45 8LN

Inspection dates 12–13 December 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Teaching is typically good with some things that are outstanding.
- Pupils across all year groups are happy. They feel safe, behave well and have positive attitudes to their learning.
- Pupils make good progress from their starting points and a large majority make better than expected progress in English and mathematics.
- The school works extremely well with parents and families. Parents and carers are highly positive about the support their children receive, particularly for pupils with special educational needs.
- Pupils have clear values of honesty, respect and tolerance for others because relationships are strong.
- Pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) make excellent progress because their needs are very well provided for.
- The driving force behind the school's recent improvement has been the strong leadership of the headteacher.
- There is a relentless focus by staff, with support from governors, to raise pupils' achievement and improve the quality of their learning.
- All pupils, including those whose circumstances might put them at risk, are well cared for and supported.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' attainment is improving but is low at the end of Year 2, particularly in writing.
- Not enough pupils are reaching the higher levels in their work because not all lessons are good and outstanding and tasks in some lessons are not sufficiently demanding.
- Pupils' progress in writing lags behind that in reading.
- Teachers do not always have enough opportunities to share good practice.
- The school's improvement plan does not focus clearly enough on how the school will measure its success.
- Senior leaders do not yet look closely enough at how pupils achieve in lessons.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors held meetings with staff, groups of pupils, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a range of information including: the school improvement plan; the tracking of pupils’ progress; monitoring reports; the work pupils were doing in their books and the school’s documentation relating to safeguarding.
- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 11 lessons and listened to pupils read. In addition, the headteacher carried out one joint observation with an inspector.
- The inspectors met some parents and carers informally at the start of the school day and took into account the responses from the school’s own surveys. There were five responses from parents and carers to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Steve Isherwood, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Sally Kenyon

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school exceeds the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations of pupils' attainment and progress.
- The majority of pupils are White British with a small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups.
- The school includes two resourced units for pupils with ASD.
- The school has the Eco School and International School awards.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the school was last inspected in 2008.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment and accelerate their progress, particularly at Key Stage 1 and in writing by:
 - closing the gap between pupils' progress in reading and writing
 - increasing the proportion of good and outstanding lessons
 - increasing the level of challenge in lessons so that more pupils reach the higher levels in their work.
- Strengthen leadership further by:
 - improving observations of teaching to identify more clearly the achievement of pupils in lessons
 - fine-tuning the school improvement plan to identify more precisely how the school will measure its success.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Nursery and Reception classes with skills that are well below those expected for their age, particularly in language and communication. They get off to a good start, are well taught and settle quickly into school routines. By the time pupils leave in Year 6, the proportion of pupils attaining at the expected Level 4 in English and mathematics is broadly average. This means that the progress pupils make from their starting points, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, is good. A notable success is that in 2012, 90% of Year 6 pupils made expected levels of progress in English and 100% did so in mathematics.
- The school's own data as well as the teacher assessments for 2012 show that while attainment is low at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics, increasing numbers of pupils in Years 1 and 2, including those supported by the pupil premium government funding, are catching up and making better progress than previously. This is because the quality of their learning and what the school offers pupils is improving.
- Pupils' progress in writing lags behind that in reading. Not enough pupils are reaching the higher levels in their work. This is because not all lessons are good and outstanding and on occasions tasks for more-able pupils are not sufficiently challenging.
- Pupils with ASD in the enhanced provision groups make excellent progress in their work because their needs are provided for extremely well in a structured and caring environment. As one child politely pointed out to the inspector, 'Can you see how peaceful it is in here?'
- In reading, attainment is currently low at the end of Year 2 and broadly average at Year 6. However, pupils' progress is improving securely because the school has done a great deal to raise the profile of reading across the school. As a result, pupils read with expression and enjoy talking about the author and content of their books. Increasingly, they are using their knowledge of letters and sounds to build words and blend them together. They most certainly see the value of reading and comment that the school does much to encourage them to read at home.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good with elements of outstanding practice, particularly in the resourced units for pupils with ASD. In the main, lessons see busy pupils responding with enthusiasm to the increased opportunities to apply their thinking skills and to work independently. Enthusiastic and confident teachers, in partnership with teaching assistants and support staff, are now planning more frequently imaginative classroom activities that excite and motivate pupils to succeed.
- The proportion of good and outstanding lessons is increasing well but needs to advance further to overcome past underachievement at Key Stage 1 and to ensure that more pupils reach the higher levels in their work.
- Teachers have increased their knowledge of what makes an effective lesson and are more aware of the impact of their work on pupils' progress. Opportunities for staff to learn from each other and share good practice are gathering pace but need to go further to ensure that all teaching is consistently good and better across the school.
- In the better lessons, relationships are strong, teachers question pupils effectively which keeps pupils on their toes, teaching assistants make a valuable contribution, good links are made with previous work and other subjects, pupils are motivated by the tasks in hand and pupils have good opportunities to discuss and share their ideas with each other. As a result, learning is fun. Furthermore, where teaching is most effective, pupils are very well supported to improve their work with helpful comments from teachers in their books.
- When the planning and teaching are at their best the impact on pupils' progress is clear to see. For example, pupils in Year 6 made good progress in their understanding of percentages and fractions by solving problems and working together in small groups. This involved investigating

the percentage of goals scored and chances missed at a football penalty shoot-out. This lesson confirmed how well pupils can achieve when expectations are high and the teaching imaginative.

- Where teaching is less strong, in some lessons teachers underestimate what pupils can achieve. This means that some of the tasks for more-able pupils are not sufficiently demanding. On occasions, teachers control what pupils do too tightly which limits pupils' ability to work independently.
- Most teachers use resources well to motivate pupils with the frequent use of information and communication technology (ICT) to help with pupils' learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- According to many parents and carers, pupils' behaviour and attitudes have improved dramatically over the past three years. This is because of increased expectations by staff and significant improvements in how teachers manage pupils' behaviour in class. As a consequence, pupils are very clear about what is expected of them. Around the school, pupils are polite, friendly and well-mannered. They respond very well to adults because high quality relationships have been formed and are the key to this aspect.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and speak highly of staff. They are confident that their voice will be heard and that any problems will be swiftly resolved. 'If people get annoyed, it gets sorted out straight away', said one child. 'Teachers listen to us,' said another.
- When asked to express their views about the school, pupils found it very difficult to think of any improvements they would like to see. There was strong praise for the wide range of clubs and activities on offer and for the quality of their lessons. They were very clear that 'learning is fun' in the school.
- Pupils feel free from bullying and harassment. Instances of all kinds of bullying and disruptive behaviour are rare. When they do occur they are dealt with consistently by staff. As a result, pupils leave the school as confident learners, well prepared for secondary school. In addition, pupils are confident that there is no name-calling because of someone's disability, race or religion.
- Pupils' attendance and punctuality have improved significantly over the last year. This is due to the fact that the school works very effectively with parents and families, including those hard to reach, to cement high quality partnerships between home and school. As one parent commented, 'Nothing is too much trouble for the staff here; they have helped me so much with courses and training'.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Pupils mature into well-rounded young people with clear values of respect and tolerance of others of different ages, ethnicity and ability. This is because these aspects are central to the school's values, beliefs and attitudes.

The leadership and management are good

- Good leadership and management, spearheaded very effectively by the headteacher, have been central to the school's improvement over the last three years. With good support from colleagues, including governors, he has successfully raised expectations and generated a clear understanding of how to improve the school further. As one member of staff commented, 'It is a joy coming to work and to be part of this team'.
- According to some of the pupils, the headteacher has been 'proper busy' in moving the school forward. As a consequence, the school is most certainly run for the benefit of the pupils and is well placed to continue to improve. Parents and carers hold the school in high regard and are fulsome in their praise for the support their children with special educational needs receive.
- The school has used its allocation of the pupil premium fund wisely by investing in the role of a higher-level teaching assistant to provide specific interventions for individuals and groups of pupils in Key Stage 2. This appointment is having a positive impact on raising pupils' attainment and in accelerating their progress.

- Senior leaders are very focused on improving the life chances and in removing the barriers to learning for all pupils whatever their circumstances. The school's promotion of equal opportunities and tackling discrimination is therefore a high priority for senior leaders and staff.
- A robust system of monitoring the quality of teaching has been established. This information is now being used to inform the professional development of teachers and in determining their pay. Further improvements are required in how senior leaders make judgements on the achievements of pupils and groups of pupils in lessons.
- The school improvement plan sets out very clear priorities for improving the school. However, some of the targets and criteria for measuring success within the plan are not as sharp as they could be to fully inform staff and governors about how well the school is improving over time.
- There has been some effective support from the local authority in self-evaluation, data analysis and in strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The impact of this can be seen in the increasing confidence of staff and in the improvements to teaching and learning.
- The range of subjects that the school provides is supported effectively with a wide variety of visits and visitors into school. These add considerable enjoyment to pupils' learning and are highly valued by all. Year 6 pupils, for example, talked enthusiastically about meeting a local resident who was an evacuee during the Second World War.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are aware of what goes on in school and are knowledgeable about the schools priorities. As a group, they are increasingly confident to ask challenging questions of the headteacher and senior staff. They are aware of links between the quality of teaching and pupils' progress and know about teachers' pay. Statutory duties are met well. Governors ensure that all staff are vetted and trained appropriately to keep pupils safe and free from harm. Systems to safeguard and protect pupils meet requirements and plans are in place to review these more frequently. Governors are committed to see the school improve further and are keen to access further training to support their own development.

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	105299
Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	402974

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	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Whitby
Headteacher	Ross Armitage
Date of previous school inspection	22 January 2008
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