

Alexandra Park Junior School

Brook Lane, Oldham, Greater Manchester, OL8 2BE

Inspection dates 30–31 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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.

- Since the previous inspection, the school has improved the quality of teaching so that it is now good. Teachers have high expectations and teach interesting lessons. Some of the teaching is outstanding.
- The school has been highly successful in improving the links with parents. Attendance is above average.
- Achievement is good. Pupils make at least good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and attainment by the time they leave is in line with national averages.
- Behaviour is good, pupils are keen to learn and say they feel safe in school.
- The school is led and managed well due in no small part to the determined leadership of the headteacher.
- Governors' good awareness of the school's strengths and of areas to be developed further ensures that they carry out their duties well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding.
- Marking other than in literacy books is inconsistent.
- Not enough is done in sharing outstanding teaching practice across the school.
- While the main parts of lessons are planned so that the work set is challenging for all pupils, this is not always the case in the introductory activities planned, especially in mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 20 lessons .The headteacher declined the invitation to undertake joint observations. Additional short visits in lessons were carried out to look at important issues such as how well pupils get on with their classmates and how well they behave.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils chosen at random, members of the governing body and with senior staff. Meetings were also held with a group of parents and with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and talked to them about the types of books they enjoy and why.
- Pupils’ current work and available work and assessment from the previous academic year were scrutinised, including information which showed how well pupils do in English and mathematics.
- No responses were received to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). The school had carried out its own surveys of parents’ views and this information was provided for the inspectors to look at.
- Most members of staff completed the voluntary staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Geoffrey Yates, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Terry Bond

Additional Inspector

Kathryn McArthur

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized junior school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is high.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding (pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is above average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has achieved many awards including Healthy School status.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more of it is outstanding by:
 - ensuring that lesson planning provides activities matched well to pupils' needs throughout all of the lessons, especially in mathematics
 - making better use of marking so that pupils know what is needed to move them on in their learning in all subjects, not just in literacy
 - sharing more the very best practice in teaching amongst staff.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When pupils join the school in Year 3, their attainment in English and mathematics is below average but there is some variation from year to year. They make at least good progress and by the end of Year 6 attainment is average in English and mathematics. This demonstrates good progress since the previous inspection where attainment was found to be below average. Parents and pupils themselves say that progress is good.
- There are no significant variations in the achievement of boys and girls or between pupils from different minority ethnic groups. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals achieve very well and make better progress than those not eligible. This is partly because the pupil premium funding is used well to provide additional support staff who help teachers in ensuring that any gaps in pupils' learning are tackled well.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive good quality support as do those at an early stage of learning to speak English and achieve well as a result.
- In the lessons observed pupils made good progress overall with progress in some lessons outstanding. Pupils are keen learners and rise to the challenges set for them by their teachers. For example, Year 6 pupils ably discussed differences in writers' styles of writing with one pupil pointing out that one piece of writing was 'more factual'. Comments made by the teacher such as, 'there is no such thing as an incorrect opinion', really encourage pupils to say what they think.
- Attainment in reading is average, with clear evidence of an increasing number of pupils exceeding what is expected. For example, a group of Year 6 pupils is working towards Level 6, (the reading attainment level normally expected in Year 8 in a secondary school). Pupils talk happily about why they enjoy reading.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and there is much strength in the teaching observed. For instance, teachers place a great emphasis on using questioning to establish what pupils have learnt and then question further to move that learning forward. Teachers throughout the school have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and learning.
- Good use is made of teaching assistants in supporting pupils and of the learning mentor in helping to meet pupils' individual needs.
- In the outstanding lessons seen, a common theme was the pace of lessons and the variety of activities provided, matched very well to pupils' needs. Where teaching was less strong, although there was a good match of work to pupils' needs in the main part of lessons this was not consistent throughout the lessons. For example, tasks set in the opening part of mathematics lessons were not matched well to pupils' different levels of attainment.
- Relationships are outstanding and this results in pupils wanting to produce their very best work. One pupil's poem describing an alien included the lines, 'Head as round as a balloon, face like an apricot, and eyes like disco balls.'
- The school has recently revised its marking policy. A good feature is that pupils respond to marking and improve their work. However, marking, other than in English, is not used consistently well in all classes.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs benefit from the help provided by support staff who are deployed effectively both within and outside the classroom.
- Reading is taught well throughout the school. Pupils say they enjoy reading and are keen to talk about what they like to read.
- Teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Visits to places of interest and work done with schools in areas different from the school's locality broadens pupils'

understanding.

- Parents spoken to during the inspection believe the quality of teaching is good, as do the pupils who spoke with inspectors.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- This is a school where pupils get on very well with each other and with the staff. This is a key factor in ensuring that good progress is made.
- The school's own survey and discussions held with parents demonstrate that the school provides a safe environment and that pupils enjoy school and behave well.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is mostly good. Pupils are polite, mostly well-mannered and are eager to talk. However, a small number of pupils sometimes forget in school corridors to let adults through doors before them. Pupils are very proud of their school. For example, pupils in the school's steel band are rightly proud of performing.
- A scrutiny of records and observations during the inspection demonstrates that behaviour over time is good rather than outstanding.
- Pupils want to achieve well. They respond extremely well to the many opportunities provided for them to take on school responsibilities. They proudly wear their special badges to show, for example, they are finance managers, table monitors or personal assistants to their teachers. Being a member of the school council is seen by the pupils involved as being very important. During the inspection the pride children displayed in receiving awards during an awards assembly was a pleasure to see.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school can be seen in their above average attendance and the punctual way they arrive at the start of the day.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe and are confident that any issues they raise will be dealt with promptly by the school. They recognise dangers when using the Internet and know how to avoid these problems. They have a good understanding of different types of bullying. They are confident that should any issue ever occur, adults would deal it with fairly.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's relentless drive for improvement, with the strong support of staff has been successful. A key factor has been the emphasis placed on working more closely with parents and carers to involve them in their children's education. One parent with very little understanding of English commented via an interpreter that even though she now lived in a different area she still sent her child to the school because of the good links between home and school.
- The management structure is effective and leaders at all levels have been instrumental in implementing initiatives to improve the quality of education pupils receive. These initiatives include before- and after-school activities that are well-attended.
- Leaders and managers have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses drawn from rigorous monitoring, known within the school as 'saturation monitoring'. The systems for recording and analysing information about pupils' progress are thorough. They are supplemented well by teachers' prior knowledge of each pupil as an individual.
- Good leadership of the performance of staff has brought about improvements in the quality of teaching with teaching issues from the previous inspection tackled well. This has come about by leadership teams working alongside individual teachers, ensuring a greater consistency in the quality of teaching. Even so, not enough is done to share the very best practice, for example, sharing ways of ensuring that marking is always used well, not just in literacy lessons. The staff questionnaires indicate that staff think highly of the leadership of the school and of the provision made for their professional development.
- All pupils have an equal chance to succeed without discrimination. The school celebrates the

differences between pupils from all backgrounds and abilities, and meets all requirements for safeguarding children.

- The curriculum is of a good quality, and is enhanced by the emphasis given not only in ensuring that basic skills are taught well but by making sure, for example, that pupils have wider learning experiences such as 2D and 3D art work with a visiting artist. The curriculum makes a strong contribution to the pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong and take a great pride in caring for others.
 - The local authority has a good relationship with the school. It acknowledges that the school has improved and is now good and as a result now provides only 'light touch' support.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. The governing body discharges all its legal responsibilities well. Governors have a good awareness of the school's strengths and areas for development. They have looked at school assessment data and had these explained to them when required. As such, they have a good understanding of the school's performance and are rightly proud of the improvements made since the previous inspection. In order to have a greater understanding and say in school affairs, governors visit classrooms and are not afraid to ask searching questions. They keep a close check on the school's budget, making sure that, for example, pupil premium money is used to good effect and for the purpose intended. Governors have a good understanding of how performance management is carried out. They ensure that good teaching is rewarded and that teaching which is less successful is tackled. The Chair of the Governing Body makes a point of interviewing all staff before they receive an improvement in salary as a result of performance management.
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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	105626
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	400790

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	302
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Widall
Headteacher	Irene Barratt
Date of previous school inspection	21 October 2009
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