

Alma Park Primary School

Errwood Road, Levenshulme, Manchester, Lancashire, M19 2PF

Inspection dates 15–16 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- From their typically well-below average starting points, pupils achieve well to reach standards that are broadly average by the time they leave at the end of Year 6 and standards are improving.
- Good teaching, as well as some that is outstanding, helps the majority of pupils of all abilities and groups to make at least good, and in some cases, outstanding progress.
- Typically, teachers are well aware of pupils' capabilities and of their prior learning and understanding and they plan very effectively to build upon these.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and makes a significant contribution to their learning and personal development. They are very polite, well-mannered and respectful, and feel very safe and valued in the school.
- The new headteacher has led the school very well through a period of transition and it is starting to recover its former exceptional levels of performance. He is ably and willingly assisted by all staff and the governing body. Together, they are successfully improving the school at a good rate. The quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are improving.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Over time there have been inconsistencies in pupils' achievement in some areas of the school and progress is not yet consistently outstanding.
- There is not enough outstanding teaching and a small minority requires improvement. Not all teachers ensure that the pace of lessons is brisk enough.
- Teaching assistants are not always used to good effect.
- Marking does not always inform pupils well enough on how to improve their work.
- Opportunities to monitor pupils' progress regularly in class are sometimes missed.
- Senior leaders do not yet monitor the on-going progress of groups of pupils often enough to highlight variances and ensure that timely action is always taken.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all mainstream classes as well that of small groups receiving specific support for English and mathematics. This totalled 26 observations, of which four were conducted in conjunction with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils and to parents as they brought their children to school in the morning. They took account of 58 responses from parents to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, as well as 46 questionnaires from staff.
- Meetings were held with representatives of the governing body, staff and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of school documentation, including the school’s records of pupils’ performance, evaluations of the quality of its teaching over time and its short- and long-term plans. Safeguarding procedures were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors heard two groups of pupils read and checked the school’s information about pupils’ progress in reading. They also looked at the school’s specialist provision for hearing-impaired pupils.

Inspection team

Nigel Cromey-Hawke, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Susan Davis	Additional Inspector
Steven Hill	Additional Inspector
Pauline Pitman	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much larger than average-sized primary school with more boys than girls.
- A very small minority of pupils is White British. Most pupils are from a diverse range of minority ethnic backgrounds, although the largest group is Asian or Asian British. The proportions that speak English as an additional language are well-above average. However, other than children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, a few are at an early stage of learning to speak English.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after.)
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The school also operates a specialist unit for 12 hearing-impaired pupils.
- Movement of pupils in and out of the school at times other than is normal is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There has been a significant number of staffing changes over the last two years, including the appointment of the new headteacher in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise attainment and improve pupils' achievement by extending the very good practices evident within outstanding lessons across all teaching, especially in respect of:
 - building good levels of pace into lessons to ensure that good or better progress is made by all pupils
 - regularly monitoring the learning of pupils within lessons and adapting teaching to meet the changing needs of learners
 - extensively briefing teaching assistants and other adult helpers in classes to ensure the most effective use of their support
 - making sure that the quality of marking and feedback on pupils' work is consistently good so that pupils know clearly what they need to do to improve their learning further.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management even further by:
 - analysing the on-going progress of groups of pupils more frequently so that senior leaders have a clearer understanding of the performance of all areas of the school and can act upon this information rapidly.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are well below those typical for their age. They make good progress through both Nursery and Reception Years and achieve well. Progress in children's personal development is especially good, as is reading for those children in the early stages of the acquisition of English.
- School data and inspection evidence show that, over time, pupils in Key Stage 1 continue to make good progress and there is evidence within current groups that this is accelerating to outstanding progress. Consequently, standards by the end of Year 2 are rising strongly.
- The teaching of reading is a major strength of the school. Pupils develop a love of books and gain enjoyment of reading because it is taught well. Results in the Year 1 national assessment of pupils' skills in using letters and sounds (phonics) to help them read were well above those found nationally.
- Attainment over time at the end of Key Stage 2 is broadly average. In 2011, attainment fell to below average but has since risen and in 2012, closely matched national expectations overall. School data and inspection evidence indicate this trend of improvement is set to continue. The attainment of pupils currently in Year 6 is above average.
- Good and in some cases accelerated levels of progress over time can be seen in reading, writing and mathematics in many Key Stage 2 classes. Two years ago, throughout Key Stage 2, pupils were making the expected rate of progress. Current year groups within this key stage show that some gaps have been closed through rapid progress but school data and lesson observation show there is still some variability in the levels of progress across classes and subjects. This is especially the case within Years 6, 5 and 3, where there are pockets of pupils who do not make more than the expected rate of progress.
- Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those attending the hearing impairment unit make outstanding progress because of the excellent support and guidance they receive.
- Pupils who join the school part way through a key stage are quickly integrated into school life. Most make progress in line with that of other pupils in the school, as do those whose first language is not English.
- The school uses its pupil premium funding well and pupils known to be eligible have improved their rates of progress from good to now outstanding. In 2012, for example, the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in Year 6 in English and mathematics was in line with that of other school pupils. Their attainment was almost two terms ahead of similar pupils nationally and this accelerated progress has continued with current pupils known to be eligible in the school. This is due to the extensive range of high quality intervention classes and support activities provided and show the school's successful commitment to equality of opportunity.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils across the school are very positive about the quality of teaching. They are keen to do their best and take great pride in their work. They demonstrated, for instance, high levels of skill in using computer technologies and film to communicate their ideas in an English lesson and spoke to an inspector about this with confidence and enthusiasm.
- Staffing changes recently have meant that a sizeable number of staff are either new to the school or to their roles within it. All teachers are highly committed and extremely enthusiastic about their work and the incoming headteacher has ensured that the quality of teaching continues to improve and the large majority of teaching is at least good, with some that is outstanding. There are variations within this, however, and a small minority of teaching still requires improvement.

- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good, with examples of outstanding practice seen during the inspection. The freedom of children to move between indoor and outside learning experiences enhanced their independent learning considerably.
- Literacy and numeracy are taught well, especially reading. Past relative weaknesses within writing are being overcome successfully through a whole-school focus on this over the last year. This has included a strong emphasis upon enabling pupils to use and apply their writing regularly across the curriculum subjects. As a result, pupils are able to link their understanding of different areas of learning well.
- The strengths of the best teaching within Key Stages 1 and 2, including that seen within the outstanding lessons, are also the shortcomings of weaker practice. In one outstanding guided-reading lesson, for example, the teacher constantly monitored the learning of all groups of pupils, including those working without adult support, and reshaped their activities and learning objectives repeatedly throughout the session. Excellent use was made of questioning and a brisk pace maintained to ensure that learning never flagged and pupils were constantly challenged. In other, weaker lessons this is not the case and, as a result, learning slows and in a small minority of cases, teaching requires further improvement.
- Similarly, in many lessons teaching assistants are briefed very well and are highly instrumental in shaping the learning of groups of pupils, often in temporary break-away groups within the lesson, or through dedicated support for pupils with specific learning needs within the classroom. In a few cases, teaching assistants are underused for significant parts of lessons and are not used to good effect.
- Outstanding and good teaching also features high quality marking and feedback within pupils' books, helping them to understand the quality of their work and what they need to do to move it on further. Not all teachers however adapt these effective practices which limits the ability of some pupils to shape their own learning.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the teaching is of the highest order. Pupils are frequently given time to reflect on issues such as morals, the arts (notably music) and learning about other countries, reflecting the school's wide multi-cultural intake and its extensive international links with China and other areas of the world.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils behave exceptionally well and the school is a calm, well-ordered and harmonious multi-cultural community where learning and diversity are highly valued and discrimination of any form is not tolerated. Disruption in lessons is extremely rare, and pupils work hard to support each other in their learning.
- Virtually all parents who responded to Parent View feel that their children are looked after well and that the school makes sure they are well-behaved. All staff who completed the inspection survey strongly agreed with this.
- The attitudes to learning that pupils develop in their time in school are exceptional. They are highly motivated and enthusiastic about school. They are polite to both adults and each other, ask and respond to questions with maturity and good sense and have highly developed social skills.
- Pupils have a very well-developed sense of right and wrong, helped by sessions that teach them about philosophy within Year 6 and through the excellent social and personal education programme across the school.
- The active school council plays a major part in helping to shape the daily life of the school but also in feeding back on the quality of teaching and range of themes covered within the curriculum. Pupils therefore feel they are listened to and they are confident that the school takes their views seriously.
- Pupils' understanding of different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying, is very well-developed and, when it occurs, which is rarely, it is dealt with very effectively. Pupils feel extremely safe and highly valued within the school.

- Pupils' enjoyment of school is shown by their well-above average attendance, low levels of persistent absence and total lack of exclusions over many past years.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher has high expectations of everyone and has led the school through its recent staffing changes with great sensitivity and skill. He is supported well by governors, some of whom are new to the school, and by his small senior leadership team. The size of this team however is, rightly, under review by governors in order to increase its already good capacity for strategically leading the school even further.
- An interim development plan is in place and clearly focuses upon key aspects of the school's performance. It is supported by extensive and well-applied subject and phase leader plans which together provide a good structure for moving the school forward.
- Leaders are already successfully tackling priorities for improvement. For example, this was seen in the consistent approach to the teaching of phonics and in improvements to the ways in which pupil progress is assessed and recorded. Information about pupils' achievement is now more detailed. Teachers and phase leaders use this information well to pinpoint what and where additional support is needed. However, senior leaders do not yet analyse the on-going progress of groups of pupils often enough in order to spot quickly precisely where pupils' achievement could improve and ensure that this is prioritised.
- The management of how staff perform, including the training of teachers and other adults, effectively meets the needs of the school and individual staff. It has been successful in quickly developing the expertise of teachers new to the school. Leaders check the quality of teaching carefully. They provide meaningful areas for development and ensure that teachers respond to them successfully.
- The curriculum is vibrant and rich, with exciting opportunities to use computerised technologies within learning. It is supplemented by many visits and visitors to make learning meaningful and memorable. Excellent displays of pupils' work around the school celebrate their efforts. The curriculum utilises the richness of its pupils' varying heritages extremely well, with many parents contributing to teaching about their cultural traditions, costume, faiths and food. As such it supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well.
- The successful use of the pupil premium funding has widened the range of opportunities offered and increased the ambition and self-esteem of this group of pupils. It has been used well to help to accelerate their learning through additional support for literacy and through first-hand experiences that would not otherwise have been possible.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has played an important part in school improvement, helped by light-touch support from the local authority. Governors are extensively involved in the daily life of the school. They have helped stabilise staffing and successfully led the search for a high quality leader for the school. They hold staff to account well and know about the quality of teaching. They ensure that performance management takes place and is meaningfully linked to salary progression. They ensure that safeguarding requirements are met. They have recently benefited from training in the use of pupil performance data and know how well the school performs in comparison to others. This helps them to shape the school's drive for improvement successfully, further strengthening its capacity for sustained improvement.

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	105389
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	412504

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	484
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rachel Foakes
Headteacher	Charles Parfitt
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2009
Telephone number	0161 224 8789
Fax number	0161 225 2776
Email address	admin@almapark.manchester.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

