

Irk Valley Community School

10 Waterloo Street, Lower Crumpsall, Manchester, M8 5XH

Inspection dates 1–2 July 2014

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Requires improvement | 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 | | Outstanding | 1 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school.
- Children get a very good start to their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language achieve well because work is planned to meet their needs and they are well supported.
- Teaching is good across the school, and some is outstanding. Staff typically have high expectations and pupils learn quickly.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They enjoy coming to school and are keen to learn. They say they feel very safe and are well looked after in school.
- The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. School leaders and governors have a very clear understanding of how well the school is performing and where it can do better. They have worked well together to secure rapid improvement in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement since the previous inspection.
- Parents are very supportive and appreciative of the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally pupils are not given work that is hard enough to challenge them to make the best possible progress.
- Staff do not always ask questions that challenge pupils to deepen their understanding and extend their learning.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunity to use and apply their mathematical skills and knowledge to investigate and solve practical problems.
- There are too few opportunities for staff to observe and share outstanding teaching practice within the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 28 lessons, or part lessons. Two lessons were observed jointly with the deputy headteachers.
- Meetings were held with school leaders and with two governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors also spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors met two groups of pupils and also spoke informally to other pupils in lessons and during break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors looked at the work pupils were doing in lessons and in their books over time. They listened to pupils in Year 2 and Year 5 read and talked to them about their enjoyment of reading.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and examined a number of documents concerning pupils' current achievement and progress, development plans and information about teachers' performance. They also looked at records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding arrangements. Minutes of governing body meetings were also considered.
- There were too few responses to the Parent View questionnaire to analyse, but inspectors considered 154 responses to a school survey of parents' views conducted this year. They also looked at 34 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- During the inspection Year 6 pupils were on a school visit and Year 5 pupils were involved in a production of Macbeth at the Royal Exchange Theatre for much of the time.

Inspection team

Robert Birtwell, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Pamela Hemphill

Additional Inspector

Sharon Lambert

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Pupils are taught in 18 classes from the Nursery to Year 6.
- A large majority of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with about 60% of pupils of Pakistani heritage.
- Over three quarters of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, and children looked after by the local authority.)
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported at school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The executive headteacher, a National Leader of Education, joined the school in June 2013.
- The school has worked closely with Ss Simon and Jude CE Primary School in Bolton.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching so that achievement becomes outstanding by ensuring that:
 - work set is always hard enough so that pupils are consistently challenged to make the best possible progress
 - pupils are asked questions that deepen their understanding and extend their learning more often
 - pupils have more opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills and knowledge to investigate and solve practical problems
 - staff have more opportunity to observe and share outstanding teaching within the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The achievement and progress of pupils across the school are rising rapidly.
- Most children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge that are generally well below those typical for their age. Following recent improvements they now make very good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. They are well taught and have many opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge. They are well prepared to enter Key Stage 1.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics have been improving. In 2013 they were below average, but were higher than in 2012. The school's most recent data for current Year 2 pupils are much more positive and show that they have reached standards that are above the national average. This represents good progress from pupils' starting points. Inspection evidence confirms that pupils in Years 1 and 2 are currently making good progress.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 fell in 2013. They were around average in reading, but below average in mathematics and well below average in writing. The proportion of pupils who made the progress expected of them was average in reading and mathematics, but below average in writing. The proportion that made good progress was close to average in mathematics, but below average in reading and writing.
- Inspection evidence and the school's most recent data for Key Stage 2 show that all groups of pupils are now making accelerated progress and achieving well. Current Year 6 pupils are on track to make much better progress and achieve above average standards in all subjects this year, with a large proportion making better than expected progress.
- Pupils make good progress in reading because they are well taught and have opportunities to read regularly. Key Stage 1 pupils have a good knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds they make). The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 national phonics check has been average for the last two years and is expected to rise this year.
- The school has worked effectively to improve pupils' writing skills since the previous inspection and they now make good progress. There is a clear focus on spelling, grammar and presentation, and pupils write well in a range of styles across different subjects.
- Pupils have well-developed numeracy skills and make good progress in mathematics. However, they do not have enough opportunity to use and apply their mathematical knowledge and skills to investigate and solve 'real life' problems, both in mathematics lessons and in other subjects of the curriculum.
- Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium achieve well. They make more rapid progress than other pupils because they receive effective individual and small-group support when it is needed. The attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in Year 6 in 2013 was around a term behind other pupils in reading and mathematics, and about two terms behind in writing. School data show that this gap is closing quickly.
- Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress because their needs are accurately identified and they receive good support to help them learn from skilled teachers and teaching assistants. As a result, they achieve at least as well as other pupils in the school.
- The most able pupils make good progress overall and are increasingly being given work that stretches them and enables them to reach their potential.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. It is now typically good across the school with some that is outstanding, and enables pupils in all classes to learn well. This was confirmed by teaching observed during the inspection, the work in pupils' books and school records of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching.
- Staff know pupils well and there are good relationships all round. Staff typically have high

expectations of what pupils can achieve, and set work that motivates and engages pupils so that they learn quickly. Pupils are keen to learn and were very enthusiastic about their current topic related to the World Cup. They say that they enjoy lessons because 'there is always one part that is fun' and that 'you learn a lot here'.

- In an English lesson, Year 6 pupils were developing their writing skills in response to some thought-provoking pictures. Pupils had different tasks, and questioning was used very skilfully to develop pupils' responses, and to challenge them to improve their writing. Pupils had to think hard about their work and produced some powerful writing. As a result, they made excellent progress.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved and is very strong. Staff make sure that learning is purposeful and that children are interested fully in their learning. There is strong support for children who speak English as an additional language so that they can join in all activities. There is a good balance between using the indoor and outdoor areas. As a result, children make rapid and very good progress.
- Although staff generally have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, they do not always make sure that the work set is challenging enough to enable pupils to learn as much as they could. Sometimes pupils are not given work that is hard enough to enable them to make the best possible progress.
- Questioning is used skilfully and effectively to check and reinforce pupils' knowledge and understanding, but it is not used as frequently or well to deepen their understanding and extend their learning.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly, consistently and well. Staff use praise effectively and give helpful suggestions and guidance about the next steps in their learning. It is clear that pupils are given time to respond to these comments. As a result, pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to help pupils who find learning more difficult if they need it. This includes pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium, those who are disabled or have special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language. As a result, these pupils make good progress and any gaps in achievement are closing quickly.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite and considerate and get on well with each other and with adults in the school. This helps to create a school where pupils want to learn.
- Pupils are keen to do well and take pride in their work. Consequently, lessons typically run smoothly with no interruptions to learning.
- Discussions with pupils and the school's behaviour records show that poor behaviour, including racist or discriminatory incidents, is rare. A small number of pupils sometimes display challenging behaviour but the school manages this consistently and effectively. There is evidence of improved behaviour for these pupils.
- Inspectors observed good behaviour in lessons, in assemblies and around the school. Pupils mix well and play enthusiastically on the playground during break, and behave responsibly at lunchtime.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and are proud of it. One pupil described it as 'the best school ever'. Attendance has risen and is above average.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils are very positive about feeling very safe and well cared for in school. They refer to the Golden Rules which 'help everyone to get on with each other'. They have a very good knowledge of how to keep themselves safe in different situations, including on roads and when using the internet.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of different forms of bullying, and know the difference between bullying and falling out. They say that bullying is extremely rare and that there is no bullying in school at the moment. They are very confident that the school would sort it out

quickly if it occurred.

- Almost all parents who responded to the school's survey of parent views thought that their children feel safe at school, are well cared for and behave well. Inspection evidence supports this view.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Since his arrival, the executive headteacher has provided outstanding leadership. He has raised expectations and given the school very clear direction, and has been very well supported by the senior leadership team, middle leaders and governors. They have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection, and their actions have improved the quality of teaching and led to rapidly rising pupil achievement.
- The school's systems for checking how well pupils are doing have been strengthened. School leaders at all levels make very good use of detailed information about pupils' achievement and progress. They have a very clear view of how well the school is performing and where it could do better.
- The school improvement plan correctly identifies the key priorities for development and is firmly focused on further improving the quality of teaching and raising pupils' achievement. It is routinely evaluated and moderated as the need arises.
- The role and expectations of middle leaders have been clarified. They now have a much more active and responsible role and are more accountable for checking the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in their areas.
- School leaders closely check both the quality of teaching and learning, and pupils' performance. Any underachievement is quickly identified and addressed by providing pupils with extra help if they need it. Consequently, all groups of pupils in the school are making good progress. This shows the school's successful commitment to equal opportunities for all pupils.
- Information about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress is used effectively to check how well teachers are performing, and to identify where further support or training is needed. It is also used when making recommendations about teachers' pay.
- There have been productive and effective links with Ss Simon and Jude CE School to improve the quality of teaching and provide opportunities for teachers to observe outstanding practice. However, there have been too few opportunities for staff to share outstanding teaching within the school.
- The range of subjects taught is well planned and engages pupils effectively in their learning. It is enriched by a range of clubs, activities, trips and visits. During the inspection Year 5 pupils were actively involved in performing Macbeth at the Manchester Royal Exchange Theatre. They learned a lot, benefited greatly and fully enjoyed this experience.
- Pupils readily take on responsibility in a variety of roles, for example as members of the school council or as buddies looking after younger pupils. The school actively celebrates its diverse social and cultural mix, and there are strong links with the local community. These all contribute to pupils' strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school is using the additional primary school sports funding successfully. Specialist teachers and coaches take lessons, run activities and train staff, and the school participates in a wider range of sports competitions. This is having a positive impact on pupils' physical well-being and lifestyles.
- The local authority has provided increased monitoring and support for the school, but this is now reducing as the school improves.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governance of the school has improved rapidly since the previous inspection. Governors have reviewed their own performance, and have undertaken training to improve their skills and effectiveness. They are very well informed and know how to analyse and use data about pupils' achievement, and understand how these are linked to the quality of teaching. Governors hold the school to account very effectively by asking probing questions about how

well the school is doing and where it could do better and by setting challenging targets as part of the executive headteacher's appraisal. They make sure that pupils' achievement is considered when making decisions about teachers' pay, and that the school's finances are well managed and sound. They are fully involved in the day-to-day life of the school. They have a clear understanding of how the pupil-premium funding is spent and the impact it is having. Governors ensure that they meet all statutory requirements, including those related to safeguarding.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 105452 |
| Local authority | Manchester |
| Inspection number | 442324 |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 504 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Maureen Kennedy |
| Headteacher | Simon Bramwell |
| Date of previous school inspection | 29 November 2012 |
| Telephone number | 0161 245 7201 |
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