

Medlock Valley Community School

Deanshut Road, Fitton Hill, Oldham, Greater Manchester OL8 2PN

Inspection dates

9–10 October 2018

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders and governors do not have high enough aspirations for pupils. This has contributed to a decline in the quality of education at the school.
- Leaders and governors have an overgenerous view of the school's effectiveness.
- Too much teaching across key stage 1 and 2 is weak. As a result, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not make the progress that they should.
- Frequent changes and weaknesses in staffing have hindered school improvement.
- Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching are not effective. They have not had the desired impact on improving teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Some middle leaders are supporting the development of teaching. However, the impact of middle leadership is too variable in improving teaching and learning.
- The most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to make the progress of which they are capable. Consequently, these pupils underachieve considerably.
- The effectiveness of teaching reading, writing and mathematics skills is weak.
- The curriculum is ineffectively planned. Pupils do not develop their skills and knowledge sufficiently well in some subjects, such as history and geography.
- In the early years, children do not make good enough progress in reading and writing to ensure that they are ready for Year 1.
- Pupils' attendance is below the national average. This affects their learning.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher leads a happy, caring and nurturing school. Pupils' well-being lies at the heart of the school's ethos. Pupils are safe because of strong safeguarding procedures.
- Pupils enjoy school. They behave well and show respect to others.
- Pupils settle quickly in the early years classes.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels by:
 - raising leaders' and governors' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve
 - developing systems to monitor the quality of teaching so that leaders and governors have an accurate view of the quality of learning across the school
 - ensuring that leaders and governors secure consistently good teaching to enable all pupils to make the progress that they should across key stages 1 and 2
 - improving the skills of middle leaders so that they can have a greater impact on teaching and learning across the curriculum
 - planning the curriculum more thoroughly so that pupils acquire subject-specific skills, knowledge and understanding in a range of subjects.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in key stages 1 and 2 so that all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, make good or better progress by:
 - raising teachers' expectations and ensuring that they build on what pupils already know and can do
 - in mathematics, developing pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills
 - in writing, developing pupils' skills by giving them frequent opportunities to write
 - in reading, ensuring that teachers develop pupils' comprehension skills effectively
 - ensuring that teachers plan frequent opportunities for pupils to develop their skills and knowledge across a range of subjects.
- Raise attendance to at least the national average and reduce the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school.
- Improve the progress of children in the early years by ensuring that teachers plan high-quality, challenging and frequent learning opportunities that match children's interests and develop their reading and writing skills.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The quality of education has declined considerably at this school since the previous inspection. The headteacher has concentrated her efforts on improving pupils' personal development, behaviour and wellbeing. While this aspect of the school's work is strong, it is not replicated in pupils' outcomes. Leaders and governors do not have high enough expectations for pupils' achievement. They have overseen the decline in pupils' progress and attainment.
- Weak leadership at all levels has led to pupils making inadequate progress. This has resulted in low attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, Year 6 pupils are not well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Considerable turbulence in staffing has weakened leaders' attempts to bring about change. It has led to the considerable variation in the quality of teaching. There is a lack of secure and rigorous systems to monitor and improve the quality of teaching. This means that leaders and governors do not have an accurate view of teaching and learning across the school. As a result, leaders have not provided effective support to teachers to help them improve their practice.
- Leaders have not been convincing in improving teaching and learning. Approaches to the teaching of reading and mathematics are not well embedded. There is no systematic approach to teaching writing. This has had a negative impact on pupils' learning as they are unable to build on their previous learning as they move through the school.
- The local authority has identified that pupils' outcomes need to improve. The school adviser has commissioned comprehensive support to improve leadership at all levels. However, this is at an early stage and the quality of teaching remains variable.
- Some middle leaders are beginning to have greater influence on the quality of teaching. However, other middle leaders are at the early stages of developing their leadership skills. They have little opportunity to check learning across the school or to support their colleagues to improve their teaching skills. As a result, they are not having enough influence in rooting out weak teaching across a range of subjects.
- The curriculum lacks the structure and depth needed for pupils to build their understanding across a broad range of subjects. In subjects such as history and geography, leaders have not planned how pupils will develop their knowledge and skills. Consequently, pupils' achievement in subjects other than English and mathematics is also weak.
- Pupils with SEND do not make the progress that they should because of weaknesses in teaching. Following recent training, the leader for this group of pupils has developed an accurate view of how to improve provision. She has begun to bring about change. However, at this point in time, this has not made enough difference to those pupils with SEND currently in the school.
- Leaders identify barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils and evaluate the impact of their work to support these pupils. Leaders' checks show that this group of pupils

make the same weak progress as others in the school. Consequently, the attainment of this group is below that of other disadvantaged pupils nationally.

- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Pupils learn to be responsible by taking on leadership roles, including through the active school council. Pupils can talk confidently about British values. Leaders have developed an ethos of respect for equalities and pupils value differences.
- Leaders plan a range of interesting trips and visits to broaden pupils' experiences, including history trips to local museums and places of interest.
- Leaders ensure the school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities and sports. These are well attended and valued by pupils.
- Leaders have used the sport premium funding to ensure that pupils take part in a variety of additional sporting activities, including netball, volleyball and tag rugby.
- Newly qualified teachers (NQTs) should not be appointed.

Governance of the school

- Governors want the best for the school, its pupils, staff and parents. Although they know the main strengths and areas for development, they are not aware of just how poor the quality of education is at this school. Governors have not ensured that teaching across the school is consistently good and have not held leaders to account for pupils' weak academic outcomes.
- Governors visit regularly and provide support for the headteacher. Governors share leaders' vision to provide an inclusive, nurturing and happy school.
- Governors understand their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding well.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have created a strong culture of safeguarding in which pupils feel safe, valued and happy. Staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe both online and in the wider community.
- Systems to ensure that only suitable people are recruited to work with pupils in the school are secure. Appropriate checks are made on visitors when they arrive at the school.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' safety is a high priority and that staff are vigilant. Leaders make sure that staff receive regular and appropriate training to identify any signs of possible danger or potential abuse. The procedures for reporting any incidents or concerns are very clear and understood by staff.
- The school works well with parents and other agencies to make sure that pupils are safe, including pupils at risk of missing education. Staff with specific responsibilities for safeguarding demonstrate determination to ensure that pupils receive the right care and support.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- There is a marked difference in the quality of teaching in different year groups. Pupils make stronger progress in classes where teachers match work to pupils' abilities. However, too much teaching is ineffective. As a result, pupils do not make the progress that they should across a range of subjects.
- Teachers' expectations are not high enough. The level of challenge for pupils is often too low. Work in pupils' books shows that pupils in most classes are making slow progress because teachers do not build on what pupils already know and can do. Consequently, the most able pupils waste learning time as they complete work quickly and wait for other pupils to catch up. Less able pupils struggle with work that is too difficult for them to access.
- In mathematics, teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills. Pupils do not extend and apply their mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils, particularly the most able, do not make enough progress in this subject.
- Pupils' progress in writing is weak. Pupils have little opportunity to write at length and develop their use of increasingly complex vocabulary, punctuation and sentence structure. There is little evidence of pupils developing their writing skills across different areas of the curriculum. The approach to teaching writing is not systematic across the school, which has led to gaps in pupils' basic skills over time.
- Approaches to teaching phonics vary across year groups. This slows the progress that pupils make in this subject.
- Leaders have not put in place a successful strategy for teaching reading. This means that pupils do not develop the skills needed to understand challenging and unfamiliar texts.
- In other subjects, teachers do not plan work which develops pupils' skills and knowledge. As a result, pupils are not well-prepared for the demands of the secondary education.
- Teachers foster positive relationships with pupils. They know pupils very well and provide them with a nurturing and safe environment.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. All pupils are valued in this nurturing and inclusive school. Pupils' welfare is a high priority for staff who support pupils well. The most vulnerable pupils have access to counselling to improve their emotional well-being.
- Positive relationships between staff and pupils are a strength of the school. Leaders have created a happy environment where staff and pupils feel proud of their community. Teachers give pupils many leadership opportunities to develop their self-

confidence. 'Little helpers' in key stage 2 are role models for younger children in school. The active school council works with leaders to develop the school, including improving playtime activities. Through such opportunities, pupils learn to be responsible and caring citizens.

- Staff teach pupils to value the school's diverse population. Pupils recognise that everyone is different but equal, and that racism or other forms of bullying are not acceptable. Pupils have a good understanding of social values, including mutual respect and tolerance. Through assemblies and lessons, staff teach pupils to reflect these values in their own behaviour.
- Pupils feel safe and secure in school. They are confident about how to keep themselves safe online and in the wider community. Visits and visitors support pupils' learning, including a 'Crucial Crew' workshop where older pupils learned how to make the right choices to keep themselves safe.
- Staff teach pupils how to make healthy choices. Through the local authority 'Health Champions' project, pupils learn about healthy living. 'Pupil health champions' helped to develop the school's system for healthy snacks.
- Staff and pupils are proud of the school's achievements in sport. The school's sports coaches develop pupils' skills in a range of activities and sports, including dodgeball, dance and cheerleading. Pupils enjoy many opportunities to take part in different events and competitions, such as cross-country running. Staff encourage pupils to keep active at playtimes.
- Leaders have planned a varied and exciting range of extra-curricular clubs that are valued by pupils and well attended. Through activities, including chess, movie club and science club, pupils develop their social skills well.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. This is because whole school attendance is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has risen and is above the national average. Leaders have been proactive in taking steps to improve attendance. The headteacher and the school's attendance officer make regular contact with parents and carers through letters, meetings and home visits. They have shared with parents how important it is for their children to attend school regularly. However, some pupils miss school too often, including for term-time holidays. This has a detrimental effect on pupils' progress and attainment.
- In previous years, the number of fixed-term exclusions was above the national average. Leaders have taken effective steps to improve behaviour across the school, including through work to support pupils' emotional health and well-being. As a result, incidents of misbehaviour have fallen considerably. Due to leaders' work to promote equality, there were no incidents of racist language in school last year, and pupils' use of homophobic language fell considerably. A small number of pupils with persistent misbehaviour are well supported by staff to improve their behaviour.
- Pupils report that incidents of bullying are rare, and that staff deal with any misbehaviour. Staff, parents and pupils agree that pupils' behaviour has improved.
- Pupils are very polite and welcoming to visitors. They are well-mannered and friendly.

A strong ethos of mutual respect between staff and pupils is evident across the school.

- Pupils move around the school with consideration for others. At playtimes, pupils play well together and follow instructions from adults.
- In classes, pupils are keen to do their best. In most classes, pupils quickly follow instructions from teachers and listen respectfully to others. In some classes, low level misbehaviour is a result of work being too easy for pupils or pupils having too little work to do.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Outcomes are inadequate because pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. Pupils do not achieve well in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- By the end of key stage 2, pupils' progress in reading and writing has been in the lowest 20% of schools nationally for three years. Provisional data for 2018 shows that pupils' progress remained well below average. Pupils' progress has been stronger over time in mathematics, but is still below the national average.
- Over time, the proportions of pupils reaching expected and higher standards by the end of Year 6 have remained below national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. There are too few signs that pupils currently at the school are making stronger progress to ensure that Year 6 are better equipped to make a successful start when they enter Year 7.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1 has been consistently below the national average. This pattern continued in 2018. No pupils were working at greater depth by the end of Year 2 in reading and writing. Across key stage 1, pupils, including the most able, do not make the progress of which they are capable, particularly in reading and writing. They start Year 3 ill-equipped to access the key stage 2 curriculum.
- By the end of Year 1, pupils' attainment in phonics has improved, although outcomes have remained below national averages since the previous inspection. Changes in staffing have led to varied approaches to how phonics is taught across classes.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with SEND is too variable across the school. This is because of weaknesses in the quality of teaching. In reading, writing and mathematics, the progress of disadvantaged pupils is less than other pupils nationally by the end of Year 6.
- In reading, writing and mathematics, pupils who speak English as an additional language make stronger progress than other pupils across key stage 2. Pupils arriving from overseas are welcomed into school and quickly develop their skills in English.
- In subjects other than mathematics and English, pupils do not make adequate progress. The wider curriculum lacks the breadth and depth for pupils to develop their knowledge and skills in subjects such as history and geography.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- In the early years, children are safe and looked after well. In each class, adults show children how to play well together and to use equipment safely. Children listen to instructions and move calmly around the classrooms. The environment is safe and secure, and welfare requirements are met.
- Leaders make sure that parents are very welcome in the setting. Communication between school and home is strong. Parents enjoy bringing their children into class and staff are always ready to listen to any concerns that parents have.
- There is an appropriate system in place to ensure that children make a smooth and successful start to school. During the inspection, children were very well settled in their Nursery and Reception classes, following routines and playing well.
- Leaders have rigorous systems to check how well children learn, including disadvantaged children and children with SEND. Staff make careful observations when children start school. This means that adults have a good understanding of most children's levels of knowledge and skill.
- Children start the early years with knowledge and skills that are below those typical for their age, particularly in communication and language. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception is lower than the national average. The progress of children is weak in reading and writing, particularly for boys. Children make good progress across other areas of learning, but they do not close the gaps from their low starting points in reading and writing. This means that children are not well prepared for the challenges of Year 1.
- The early years leader has undertaken training that has improved her skills. She has an accurate view of the strengths and areas to develop in the early years, including improving provision, and planning for developing children's early reading and writing skills in the indoor and outdoor classroom areas.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes, staff have planned a range of exciting and interesting activities to interest children and develop their learning. The classrooms are bright, well-resourced and inviting. Staff provide a calm and nurturing environment and children enjoy being in school.
- In Nursery, the well-resourced and spacious indoor and outdoor classrooms contain a range of interesting opportunities to play and learn. During the inspection, children were having fun negotiating a 'race track' on balance bikes, playing cooperatively and developing their physical skills. Other children were working with great concentration on transferring water between jugs and gutters.
- In the two Reception classes, children move happily about the classrooms, engrossed in their play. Adults work with groups of children to support their learning, planning engaging activities that capture children's imagination.
- Across the early years, adults support children's language development skilfully. The adults use questions and conversation to help children develop their understanding, including children who speak English as an additional language.

School details

Unique reference number	133710
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	10042491

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	334
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nye Goodwin
Headteacher	Linda Zrada
Telephone number	0161 770 8199
Website	www.medlockvalley.oldham.sch.uk
Email address	info@medlockvalley.oldham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 February 2014

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.
- There have been a number of changes in leadership since the previous inspection, including the headteacher and governing body.
- The local authority has brokered external consultants to support the leadership team.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited classrooms to observe teaching and pupils' learning.
- Inspectors observed teaching in each year group and in a range of subjects. In some classrooms, they conducted joint observations with the headteacher or senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors talked with pupils in classes and around the school. Pupils took an inspector on a tour of the school.
- Inspectors heard four pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read.
- Inspectors checked a range of pupils' books.
- Inspectors spoke to a number of parents and took into account five responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including free-text responses.
- Inspectors took into account seven responses to the inspection questionnaire for school staff and 20 responses to the inspection questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan, behaviour and bullying logs, school policies and procedures and the school's own assessment information. A range of documentation regarding safeguarding was also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Elizabeth Stevens, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
John Shutt	Ofsted Inspector
Maureen Hints	Ofsted Inspector

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