



Varna Street Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105459
LEA Manchester
Inspection number 277358
Inspection dates 7 June 2006 to 8 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Dee Brigstock CfBT Lead Inspector

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

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|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Type of school | Primary | School address | Varna Street |
| School category | Community | | Openshaw |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 | | Manchester, Lancashire M11 1WP |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 0161 2233569 |
| Number on roll | 211 | Fax number | 0161 2238322 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | Mr J Dwan |
| Date of previous inspection | 6 December 1999 | Headteacher | Mr Madden |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Varna Street is an average sized school situated in an area of high economic deprivation. When pupils start school their skills and knowledge are low.

About two thirds of pupils are of White British heritage but the rest represent different ethnic groups from a very wide range of cultures. A third of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The number of pupils from asylum seeking families, at present 15%, is growing annually and largely accounts for the very high mobility of pupils during the school year. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is broadly average. The school won five awards in 2005: Artsmark, Healthy Schools, Basic Skills, Activemark Gold and Kerbcraft Gold.

Key for inspection grades

| | |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This school gives good value for money because the safety, well-being, enjoyment and achievement of every pupil are at the heart of its work. It successfully promotes an extraordinary ethos of acceptance of pupils from different countries. One pupil summed this up exactly by saying: 'You hear racist remarks out and about but never in our school.'

The headteacher makes excellent use of outside agencies to promote pupils' well-being and health, for example, through sponsorship from a national bakery to provide an exceptionally well-attended breakfast club. This partnership has successfully improved pupils' attendance and punctuality as well as ensuring that they start the school day refreshed, alert and ready to learn.

Good leadership focuses firmly on ensuring that the school copes well with change and on raising standards in all areas of the school's work, including retaining talented staff. Staff share their leaders' vision and are fully included in constructing a continuous, successful cycle of improvement. The school has a very effective assessment system to cater for pupils' individual learning needs. As a result, all of them achieve well in English and mathematics where very successful strategies to raise attainment are firmly embedded. Those pupils who have been at the school the longest make the best progress, regardless of whether they have learning difficulties or not, and attain average standards overall. The large, shifting population of pupils make good progress in acquiring personal skills in school. The standards these pupils attain and the progress they make in their studies depends on how long they are actually on roll. Although the science curriculum is planned adequately, pupils' books show that some aspects of the work are missed out. For example, there are insufficient opportunities to both design and conduct their own investigations. As a result, standards in science are significantly below average and pupils are not making the progress they could. The school has identified this and has made plans to improve this provision.

Teachers' relationships with pupils, classroom organisation, use of interactive whiteboards to focus pupils' attention, and management of behaviour are outstanding. These strategies ensure that lessons move at a brisk pace. Marking of pupils' work, however, is inconsistent. Not all teachers follow the same policy and sometimes the targets written in pupils' books are expressed in language that is beyond the pupils' age and maturity. As a result, they do not really understand what they are expected to do to improve.

Pupils really appreciate the wide range of educational visits on offer which give them worthwhile first-hand learning experiences. This aspect of the curriculum and the range of extra-curricular activities are good. Pupils have some opportunities to practise and refine their writing skills in subjects such as history but there is scope to make more links between subjects.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in science through ensuring that the full curriculum is taught in each year group.
- Agree a whole school marking and target setting system that all pupils understand and all teachers use.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to make links in their learning between different subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children begin Nursery with low attainment and make good progress, particularly in their personal development. When they enter Year 1 standards are below average. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 make good progress in English and mathematics, which have been the foci of the school's development over the last few years. By Year 6, standards are broadly average in English and mathematics. The school's detailed tracking and assessment system shows that all pupils who have been in school for at least two years in Key Stage 1 and three years in Key Stage 2, without exception, make good and often outstanding progress. In 2005, the admittance of three pupils into Year 6 had a significantly negative impact on the results. The highly mobile group of pupils, many of whom are at an early stage of learning English, make good progress because of additional, well-informed support. How much progress they make is entirely dependent on how long they stay in school. Standards in science are significantly below average and pupils' achievement, although satisfactory, is impeded because their work does not consistently build upon their prior learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils respect each other's differences and know a lot about different cultures because these are celebrated throughout the school. The quality of support for the children from asylum seeker families and pupils with learning difficulties is excellent. Good personal development is also clear in the Foundation Stage where children beam with pleasure during their learning. All staff consistently praise pupils' achievements. One pupil commented, 'You feel proud inside when everyone knows how well you've done.' Most pupils show a genuine desire to learn. One Year 2 pupil, at the end of a stimulating lesson, commented unprompted, 'I do love coming to school!' This attitude is reflected in the school's increased attendance figures. Pupils are highly motivated by certificates and punctuality awards and proudly wear their attendance badges. The school's successful efforts in teaching pupils how to stay healthy and safe have earned it several awards and it is extremely vigilant in keeping pupils safe. The few pupils with challenging behaviour are managed well so that little time is wasted in maintaining discipline. Pupils' contribution to the wider community and their acquisition of basic

skills, including information and communication technology (ICT), bodes well for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers and classroom assistants work together effectively in professional teams to promote good learning. For example, three times a week, Years 1 and 2 are divided into five learning groups for English and mathematics. The teachers focus on the most challenging groups of pupils such as those with learning difficulties while teaching assistants work with other groups. The outcome is evident in the accelerated progress that all groups make. The relationships between staff and pupils, the quality of lesson planning in English and mathematics, and classroom management skills are excellent. However, teachers' planning in science does not build on pupils' previous learning well enough so pupils' progress in science is not as good as it could be. The school plans to rectify this next year.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The range of learning activities provided for children in the Foundation Stage is very stimulating, particularly in the outdoor classroom where an excellent range of learning activities is provided. Children learn to play and share together well and language barriers do not appear to hinder this personal development at all.

In Years 1 to 6, a start has been made to link learning between, for example, ICT and English. However, these planned links do not extend to the arts or to science and so opportunities for pupils to refine and improve their writing skills are missed. The recent introduction of Spanish to the curriculum is proving to be very popular with pupils.

The strong emphasis on physical education supports the school's healthy eating initiatives and is having a positive impact on pupils' well-being.

Pupils and parents value the many extra-curricular clubs, including chess and playing in the steel band. Visits, including residential visits, and visitors give pupils a chance to work in teams in challenging ways and provide them with valuable, new first-hand learning experiences.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff work very skilfully to support and care for pupils from a very wide range of cultures and backgrounds. They are particularly vigilant with pupils who arrive from overseas with little or no warning and are quick to notify outside agencies when necessary. Pupils with little English receive well-informed and sensitive support from

teaching assistants and bilingual staff. Those with learning difficulties are similarly well supported. Every effort is made to ensure pupils are safe and secure.

The school has very detailed records of pupils' progress and of how well they are doing in English and mathematics. However, teachers' written guidance on how pupils could improve their work and the use of targets vary too much between classes. As a result, not all pupils can explain what they need to do to improve.

The wide range of health and safety issues identified at the last inspection have been addressed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a very clear view of school improvement and his vision is shared by the governors and staff. Governors use their expertise very well, for example, in education and sport, to both challenge and support the school's development. The headteacher, deputy and coordinators are determined that all pupils should achieve as well as they can. Their systems for monitoring teaching and learning and the way the results of these observations feed the school improvement plan are very effective. They have raised standards and the rate of pupils' progress because they pinpoint where teachers need additional coaching or resources, for example, in science. As the headteacher says, 'We aim to work smarter, not harder.' The school's provision for including an increasingly diverse intake in everything the school has to offer is first rate. The school has an accurate view of its strengths, has improved well since the last inspection, and has a good capacity to improve further. Future financial planning is sometimes thwarted by having to maintain the fabric of an old, extensive building but leaders ensure that they budget for these occasions.

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Inspection judgements

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| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | School Overall | 16-19 |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

Overall effectiveness

| | | |
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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 | NA |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 1 | NA |
| The quality and standards in foundation stage | 2 | NA |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 | NA |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | Yes | NA |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes | NA |

Achievement and standards

| | | |
|--|---|----|
| How well do learners achieve? | 2 | NA |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 | NA |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 | NA |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 2 | NA |

Personal development and well-being

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 | NA |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 | NA |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 | NA |
| The attendance of learners | 3 | NA |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 2 | NA |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 | NA |

The quality of provision

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 2 | NA |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 | NA |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 2 | NA |

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

| | | |
|--|-----|----|
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 | NA |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2 | NA |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review | 1 | NA |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 1 | NA |
| How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 | NA |
| The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected | Yes | NA |

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|---|-----|
| The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy | |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise | Yes |
| Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse | Yes |
| Learners are educated about sexual health | Yes |
| The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe | |
| Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements | Yes |
| Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place | Yes |
| Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism | Yes |
| Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them | Yes |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution | |
| Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships | Yes |
| Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community | Yes |
| The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being | |
| There is provision to promote learners' basic skills | Yes |
| Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams | Yes |
| Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form | NA |
| Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy | NA |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making us feel so welcome in your school and for being so helpful when we asked you questions. We enjoyed talking with you, looking at your work and finding out about the things you like doing.

We think there are lots of really good things about your school. The things we particularly like are:

- your school is a very friendly and pleasant place to be and so you enjoy your learning
- we think your breakfast club is splendid
- there are lots of learning activities outdoors for Nursery and Reception children
- your teachers make lessons lively and interesting and they expect you to work hard
- everyone gets on well with one another and you know a lot about each other's lifestyles
- your headteacher and the teachers are doing a really good job in always trying to make the school a little bit better.

To improve your school even more, we have asked your headteacher to:

- make science lessons more interesting and fun
- see if you can practise your learning in English and mathematics in other subjects
- ask your teachers to mark your work in a similar way and to write your targets in language you can all understand.

We both hope you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers to make Varna Street Primary School a good place to be.