

# Northenden Community School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105434
<b>Local Authority</b>	Manchester
<b>Inspection number</b>	287228
<b>Inspection date</b>	26 June 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Terry McDermott

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	231
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs E Caulfield
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Ian Beard
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 January 2002
<b>School address</b>	Bazley Road Northenden Manchester M22 4FL
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 9984825
<b>Fax number</b>	0161 9455351

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector in one day.

## Description of the school

This average size school serves the district of Northenden to the south of the city centre. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is also average and the very large majority are fluent English speakers. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average, but the proportion with statements of special educational need is well below average. The school holds the Sportsmark Award. A new headteacher has been in post since September 2006.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school because pupils make excellent progress in the time they spend here. Its inclusive ethos is maintained by staff who make every effort to ensure that each individual is valued and nurtured within a very purposeful and busy environment. The school modestly evaluates itself as good, because it knows there is always scope to do better. It gives excellent value for money.

The headteacher provides dynamic leadership and has the highest aspirations for the school and the pupils. He has released the energies of the staff team, who are collectively committed to raising attainment, and who strive for continuous improvement in all that they do. A key underpinning strength of the school is its excellent system for assessing what pupils know and can do. The information generated is used to plan in detail what pupils are going to learn next and how they are going to learn it.

Standards at the end of Year 6 have been well above average for several years. In 2006, standards were exceptionally high in English and mathematics, and well above average in science. From a broadly average starting point, this represents outstanding progress. Standards at the end of Year 2 in 2006 were below average, and reflected normal variations between cohorts. Pupils benefit from an outstanding range of provision, which includes consistently high quality teaching, very close attention to their care, guidance and support, and a rapidly improving curriculum which meets their needs and interests well. No group of pupils underachieves, though many, particularly boys, still do not have writing skills to match their skills in other areas.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding, because provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of the highest order. Pupils enjoy being in school, are polite, behave extremely well and have very mature and positive attitudes to learning. They are happy, healthy and safe, and are always prepared to take on responsibilities. The quality of care, guidance and support given to pupils is second to none. There are excellent arrangements for guiding pupils on their academic performance and the school's procedures for safeguarding pupils are robust and meet current requirements. Very good links with partners ensure that all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those special aptitudes, make progress at a similar rate to their peers.

Teaching is highly effective because lessons have a clear sense of purpose and teachers use a variety of methods to encourage pupils to work productively. This results in consistently good learning which gives excellent achievement year on year. Good quality provision in the Foundation Stage means that young children settle into the school quickly and make good progress. However, the outdoor space in the Foundation Stage is drab and bare, and does not give much inspiration to younger pupils. Because pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent throughout the school, they quickly engage in activities and show a real commitment to their work. The good and improving curriculum is enriched with Spanish lessons throughout the school and by many trips, visits and visitors who bring teaching to life and enjoyment to learning.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The leadership group are well supported by dedicated and knowledgeable middle managers. The headteacher has an extremely clear view of the school's strengths and wastes no time in identifying and taking action where improvements are required. For example, initiatives to raise pupils' achievement in writing are already showing an impact.

Honest evaluation, rapid response and a relentless quest and aspiration for best practice in all areas of the school's work, clearly point to a powerful capacity for improvement.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve standards in writing throughout the school.
- Ensure that provision for outdoor education in the Foundation Stage enables all pupils to access the full range of learning experiences.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. By the end of Year 6 they attain excellent standards in their work. Children start school with skills that are broadly similar to those expected for four-year-olds. They make good progress in all areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum and are well prepared for entry into Year 1.

Pupils consolidate their learning in Years 1 and 2 and reach standards that are average in reading and mathematics, but below average in writing. However, their personal development moves on apace, and they become very tolerant and understanding young people who can share ideas and work confidently when not directly supervised.

In Years 3 to 6, pupils achieve extremely well. This makes assessment and tracking of pupils all the more important to ensure that work gives them suitable challenge and they achieve as well as they can. The school's systems for ensuring this are exemplary. As a result, the proportion attaining the higher Level 5 in national tests in 2006 was significantly above average.

The school sets itself targets which are always well in excess of national averages and then usually exceeds them by a significant margin. The school's data convincingly show that very high standards are likely to be maintained.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

This is a very inclusive school which works successfully to build in pupils strong values of honesty, trustworthiness and a willingness to appreciate the feelings of others. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding in consequence. Their cultural development is good, but has not yet felt the full benefit of emerging as a growing focus throughout the school.

Pupils say they enjoy coming to school because it is a, 'happy place where we can learn lots of stuff'. This is confirmed by their above average attendance, their excellent behaviour, and their enthusiastic involvement in voluntary activities, including fundraising for the British Heart Foundation.

The school is calm and well ordered. Pupils move purposefully between lessons and have very good attitudes to learning. They say they feel safe and secure in school. They mix well in groups of different ages. Because relationships between pupils are so good, there is little bullying.

Pupils take on responsibilities willingly; for example, through telling other year groups what they have learned about road safety and they contribute very well to the community especially through performance activities. Participation rates are high in the growing number of activities that the school offers. The school's focus on being healthy is demonstrated by even the youngest pupils, who are able to explain clearly the effects of diet and exercise on the body.

With the excellent basic skills they gain by the end of Year 6, pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Teachers quickly pick up what pupils may not have understood and plan subsequent work to move pupils forward. Lessons move on at pace and the variety of activities maintains pupils interest. In every classroom visited during the inspection, pupils were busy and absorbed in work well matched to their needs. The arrival of visitors often went unnoticed for several minutes. Pupils are able to work independently either individually or in small groups. They think for themselves and make rapid gains in understanding because they know that teachers will always ask them to explain 'why'. This breeds self-confidence and provokes a virtuous spiral of achievement. Pupils know the levels at which they are working and what their target levels are. Many older pupils, in their writing, set themselves short term targets for improvement. These are closely based on the helpful comments teachers make in their books giving indications of what they need to do to improve, acknowledged by parents who referred to 'fantastic teachers'.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. Recent improvements to planning in writing are beginning to be reflected in better standards, particularly for boys. More remains to be done in this area, however, to ensure that pupils have a wider range of opportunities to plan their writing and to use their skills to write in different styles and for different purposes across the curriculum. The school has worked hard to plan a more creative and exciting curriculum that encourages pupils to think for themselves and stimulates their curiosity. Personal development is well supported through a good personal, social and health education programme. The school provides a good and increasing range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities particularly in the creative and artistic areas.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

The school takes exceptionally good care to protect pupils, and caters well for their diverse needs. This includes extremely good support for pupils who are more vulnerable as well as pupils who are particularly able or talented. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same progress as others because of the high quality of support given by the school. Parents are 'pleased with the school and its culture, and the support it provides'. Information from the first-rate tracking of pupils' progress is used regularly to help set individual targets for them in English, mathematics and science, and increasingly in other subjects as well.

## **Leadership and management**

#### **Grade: 1**

The quality of the school's outstanding leadership and management can be seen in

its lack of complacency and genuine enthusiasm for further improvement. All those involved in the leadership and management of the school have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses because the school has extremely robust procedures for evaluating and improving its work. Exemplary work with external partners ensures that the school maintains its very high expectations and outcomes. Middle managers, such as coordinators are now confidently evaluating and seeking to improve the school's work in their own specific subjects or areas. Governance is good and the hard working, but low on numbers governing body is now challenging the school to perform even better.

The issue of lower standards of writing existed at the time of the last inspection. Recent initiatives to address this issue are well founded, but their full effect has yet to be demonstrated. However, many improvements have been made in other areas of the school's work and have successfully driven up standards.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

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

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	1
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Northenden Community School, Manchester, M22 4FL

Thank you for your very friendly welcome when I visited your school. I really enjoyed talking to you and hearing about how much you liked your school. Many of you told me you thought the school was very good and a fun place to attend. I agree with you, but think that I would go even further. I think that you go to an outstanding school which does everything it can to help every one of you develop into mature and knowledgeable young people.

I was impressed with many of the things that go on in the school, and I have listed some of them here:

- You learn a great deal in your time in the school because teaching is excellent.
- You behave extremely well and get on together very harmoniously.
- You like the interesting work set by your teachers and you clearly enjoy discussing the new things you have learned about.
- Your headteacher and all the other adults in the school are excellent in leading you on to reach high standards in your Year 6 tests.
- You know how to keep safe and how important it is to stay healthy by eating the right foods and taking lots of exercise.

However, even in an outstanding school there are some things that could be done even better. I have asked your very hard working teachers to look closely at building up your writing skills and I have also asked that the school seek ways to improve the outdoor area in the Foundation Stage.

Thank you for making my short visit such an enjoyable one. I am sure that you will continue to work hard and make excellent progress.