



Medlock Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105483
Local Authority Manchester
Inspection number 287235
Inspection dates 25–26 January 2007
Reporting inspector Margot D'Arcy

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Wadeson Road
School category	Community		Chorlton-on-Medlock, Manchester
Age range of pupils	3–11		Lancashire M13 9UJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 2731830
Number on roll (school)	404	Fax number	0161 2732066
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Ferdousi Hoque
		Headteacher	Mrs Fiona Maguire
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average multicultural school, situated very close to the city centre of Manchester. Most pupils come from disadvantaged backgrounds and the proportion taking free school meals is well above average. The number of pupils joining and leaving other than at the usual times is high. The pupil population is made up from a wide variety of minority ethnic groups and a high proportion speaks English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. When pupils begin school in Nursery their standards are well below average in all areas and particularly weak in communication, language and literacy. During the past four years, the school has suffered instability due to staffing disruption at leadership level. The current headteacher was appointed 15 months ago. Prior to the new deputy headteacher taking up appointment this month, the school had been without a deputy since July 2006. The school has gained the Artsmark Gold award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Medlock is a satisfactory, but rapidly improving, school. Major staffing disruptions have had a damaging effect on pupils' standards and achievement and the quality of provision. Leadership and management are now satisfactory, but with some notable strengths. The work that the current headteacher has accomplished during her relatively short time in post is seen in the improvements that are happening in many areas. Rigorous monitoring and self-evaluation is at the heart of these improvements and underpins the school's very clear and accurate view of its effectiveness. In almost all areas, the school's opinion of itself, and the improvement priorities it has identified, match inspection findings and show that there is good capacity to improve. Overall, pupils achieve satisfactorily. By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average in English and science but below average in mathematics. However, the test data mask some considerable variation in progress between different year groups. The school's very detailed data are providing good information to target pupils who are underachieving; action to improve their progress in reading, writing and mathematics is paying off. Last year, for example, the progress of many pupils in reading was accelerated, and the drive to maintain this continues. A focus, from last September, to improve performance in mathematics has also been successful, with a significant number of pupils having made up lost ground. However, the gap between performance in this subject and others is still too great.

Despite the unsettled period of the last few years, Medlock's reputation for providing an exciting, creative education in a vibrant multicultural environment has been maintained. This is why pupils are so enthusiastic about their work and enjoy school so much. The curriculum is satisfactory overall but has a number of significant strengths, including excellent enrichment to support work in the arts, sport and humanities, and many opportunities for pupils to learn essential life skills. The needs of almost all groups of pupils are well served by the curriculum but, in Year 1, it has not been adapted well enough to meet their specific needs and this is having an adverse affect on their learning. Standards and provision in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory. The innovative changes to Nursery provision are impacting very well on children's learning, and similar changes to provision for Reception children are planned. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The range is wide, however, and includes good and outstanding teaching as well as a small amount that is inadequate. Variation in the way that teachers use assessment information to adapt work to meet pupils' different needs and guide them on how to improve is the main factor that prevents teaching and learning, and ultimately achievement, from being good. The school has identified this as a key priority for development.

Pastoral guidance and support is a strong feature of the school's provision and does much to raise pupils' confidence and self-esteem and promote their good personal development. Procedures for academic guidance are in place, some of which have been reviewed and improved quite recently. This aspect is developing, but practice is not consistent. Consequently, pupils are not as aware as they could be of how well they are doing and how they could improve. With this exception, pupils' personal

development is good. They behave well and have good awareness of how to keep their minds and bodies healthy, and of how to spot, avoid and deal with dangerous situations. They are very tolerant of people's differences and know how to recognise and cope with pertinent issues such as bullying and racism. Such insights, and the good opportunities pupils have to work collaboratively, to make decisions about their school and to contribute to the local and wider community, prepare them well for the future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics by the end of Year 6 so that more pupils achieve the expected Level 4 and the higher Level 5.
- Improve the way that the curriculum is organised for Year 1 pupils so that learning experiences are matched to their needs and promote improved speaking skills.
- Ensure greater consistency in teachers' use of assessment information to match work more accurately to pupils' needs and better inform them of how they can improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall, pupils achieve satisfactorily and reach standards that are broadly average by the end of Year 6. Achievement in the arts is good, however. Pupils produce high quality artwork and perform very well musically. During their time in the Foundation Stage, children make at least satisfactory progress in all areas and good progress in personal, social and emotional development. However, when they begin Year 1, standards in most areas are still below average. Speaking skills remain a significant weakness. While Year 1 pupils have some good opportunities to develop speaking skills, overall these opportunities are insufficient and not tied in well enough to learning through play and exploration. This adversely affects their achievement across the curriculum. Throughout the rest of the school, pupils' achievement varies in response to how well teachers match work to their needs. Pupils identified as lagging behind are being targeted for additional support and many have made rapid improvements in reading and mathematics. Nevertheless, achievement in mathematics is still not as good as in other subjects, particularly at Key Stage 2. The school monitors closely the achievement of different groups, ensuring that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language achieve at the same rate as others. Over time, there is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils develop well personally as a result of the wealth of exciting opportunities they are given to express themselves and to understand their place in the world. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with aspects of excellence in cultural awareness. Pupils show a very mature understanding of the various cultural

beliefs and traditions represented in their school and society, and truly appreciate and celebrate the values which diversity brings. Behaviour is good and pupils are enthusiastic about learning, both in and out of school. They participate well in extra-curricular activities and in lessons where, for example, they discuss work with talk partners. Attendance is showing good improvement in response to clear expectations from the school and is now broadly average. Pupils have a strong sense of belonging and pride in their community. They grow in confidence and self-esteem through fund-raising for various causes, contributing to decisions about the school, and performing regularly at prestigious venues such as the Bridgewater Hall.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Most of the teaching is satisfactory. Teaching is very successful in promoting pupils' enjoyment of learning. Many lessons make good use of creative opportunities to motivate pupils and help them make meaningful links between subjects. Lesson planning is rightly being improved to ensure a sharper focus on identifying what pupils should achieve. The crucial feature that separates good and better teaching from that which is satisfactory is how effectively teachers use assessment information to match work to pupils' needs. Where this is done well, the more able pupils are well challenged and those who find learning more difficult are given appropriate help. Consequently, all succeed. The work of teaching assistants varies. Some have a particularly good impact, for example, with pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and in helping those who are not fluent in English to take a fuller part in lessons. However, others are not always sufficiently involved or effectively deployed by teachers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The high profile given to the arts and a wide range of very good enrichment activities, including visits, modern foreign languages and out-of-school clubs adds much to pupils' enjoyment of learning and their personal development. Community links are strong and developed within projects focusing on art, history, geography and health education. Academic achievement is supported adequately by satisfactory provision for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Improvements are being made to ensure maximum inclusion for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those speaking English as an additional language. Children in the Foundation Stage have many good opportunities to learn through play and exploration. However, when they move into Year 1, the provision becomes too formal and insufficiently focused on developing speaking skills. Pupils with special gifts or talents are provided with additional activities to help them to develop their skills further.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The overall quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory. However, pastoral guidance and support, including good links with parents, outside agencies and other schools, is a strong feature that promotes good standards of personal development. Academic guidance and support are satisfactory. Strategies for marking pupils' work and setting them improvement targets have been reviewed recently, but practice is not yet consistent. As a result, not all pupils are aware of what they should do to improve their work. Teachers know pupils extremely well and are committed to their well-being. Very good relationships promote pupils' confidence, self-esteem and sense of security. Pupils say that they feel safe and can talk to their teachers if they are worried. Child protection and health and safety procedures are in place, but some systems are not communicated well enough to staff or parents.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher is committed to maintaining the lively, exciting and creative ethos for which this school is known, but is relentless in her drive to improve standards and ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can. Honest school self-evaluation, based on rigorous monitoring, underpins good improvement strategies. Communication with staff and governors about the changes that are needed to improve academic outcomes for pupils are clear and beginning to have a notable impact. The structure for providing leadership and management at different levels in this large school is good and, in some instances, is working very effectively. However, there is still some staffing disruption at leadership level and the impact of some initiatives has yet to be realised because they are so new. The new deputy headteacher has quickly gained a good view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and is providing effective support for the headteacher. Many governors give a generous amount of support to the school, such as helping in class and in negotiations for the new school building. They ask appropriate questions about practice but rely a little too much on the headteacher to challenge the school.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ 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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. You were all very helpful and polite and we really enjoyed talking to you. We agree with you that your lessons are exciting and that you have lots of great opportunities to visit interesting places, work with artists and musicians, and learn about people's different beliefs and customs. Your artwork was fantastic and we were really impressed when we heard the steel band practising: it made us feel like dancing! Your school works hard planning all these interesting activities and we know that you appreciate them. In very many ways you are given a super curriculum, but we feel that the children in Year 1 need to spend more time learning through play. We think that you behave well and try hard in lessons. We could see that most of you learned best when you were given work that challenged you and really made you think, so we have asked your school to ensure that all teachers do this. Many of you told us that you wanted to reach higher levels in your work but not all of you were sure how to do this. To ensure that you understand how to improve, we have asked your teachers to make sure that you know your targets. You can help by remembering them and trying hard at all times to achieve them. By the time you leave school you have learned quite a bit. However, we think that you could do much better in mathematics so we are asking your school to help you reach higher standards in this subject. We could see that you liked mathematics lessons so keep trying hard in these and do your best to reach your targets. Finally, we want to remind you of how lucky you are to have a headteacher and staff who are trying very hard to give you the best education they can to help you get on in life.