

Alkrington Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105786
Local Authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	287328
Inspection dates	11–12 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Judith Tolley

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	416
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Williams
Headteacher	Miss J Lyons
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2002
School address	Manor Road Alkrington Middleton Manchester Lancashire M24 1JZ
Telephone number	0161 6436357
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Alkrington Primary School is larger than average. Children are of predominantly White British heritage. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals is lower than average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of children for whom English is an additional language is lower than average. The school has the Active Mark and Healthy Schools awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Alkrington Primary School provides a satisfactory quality of education. Standards are broadly in line with the national average and achievement is satisfactory. By the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are in line with national averages. By the end of Year 6 standards in English, mathematics and science are also average. This represents satisfactory achievement from children's starting points. In Nursery and Reception classes provision is good; attainment on entry is broadly average and children make good progress in developing their personal, social and communication skills. They learn how to learn and how to listen and communicate with each other. Progress in reading, writing and mathematics is satisfactory. As a result children begin Year 1 with good attitudes towards their learning and a firm foundation which enables them to make satisfactory progress in Key Stages 1 and 2.

Children's personal development is good. They are well behaved, have good relationships with each other and with adults in the school. They are eager to learn and take pride in their achievements. Children play an important role in decision-making in the school through, for instance, the school council and the eco team. Older pupils also help to promote good behaviour and relationships through their work as 'playground pals' and mentors. When they are given the opportunity to take responsibility for evaluating and planning their own progress they respond well, but not all children have the opportunity to do this.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and leads to children's satisfactory achievement. There are pockets of good practice but these are not effectively shared and spread across the whole school. This leads to some variability between classes. Teachers present ideas clearly, they have good relationships with children and they sequence activities well so children build effectively on previous learning. In the best lessons assessment information is used effectively to meet the needs of all learners. However, this is not always the case so that the most able, in particular, are not always provided with the challenge they need to reach their full potential. Similarly, there are too few opportunities for children to explore ideas for themselves and learn from each other.

The curriculum is satisfactory overall and children value opportunities to participate in sports, dance, and theme days and to learn a modern language. However, although there are instances of good practice, opportunities are missed to develop children's skills of numeracy and literacy through other subjects. Children are well looked after and feel safe. However, academic tracking and guidance is as yet at an early stage of development so that children do not always know in sufficient detail what to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and deputy have a clear idea of most of the strengths and areas for development as a result of detailed analysis of assessment data. The role of middle leaders, however, is underdeveloped so that staff do not always work as effectively as they might as a team to raise standards and improve provision. Actions taken to improve standards have proved successful over the last two years but there remains considerable variability in practice across the school. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The school's vetting procedures for appointing staff follow government guidelines. The capacity to improve further is satisfactory. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the role of middle leaders to raise standards and eliminate inconsistencies in practice across the school.
- Use assessment information more effectively in lesson planning to better meet the needs of all children, particularly the most able.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to explore ideas for themselves and learn from each other.
- Increase opportunities for children to develop literacy and numeracy skills through other subjects.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

By the end of the Foundation Stage most children achieve national expectations for their age. They make satisfactory progress in their reading, writing and mathematics and good progress in developing personal and social and communication skills. Test results for Key Stages 1 and 2 in 2006 and the provisional results for 2007 are broadly average and represent satisfactory achievement in relation to children's starting points. Standards have improved over the last four years in line with the national trend and there has been marked improvement in writing. In 2006, fewer children than average attained the higher levels in mathematics and English at both key stages. The gap between the performance of boys and girls in tests has narrowed over the last two years and no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls was evident in work seen during the inspection. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language make the same satisfactory progress as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

All children play and work well together. Children are well behaved and have good relationships with each other and with adults in the school. They have a good sense of what is right and wrong, are keen to gain rewards and proud when they do so. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their cultural awareness is good as a result of the opportunities they are given to explore their own and other cultures, for example through tasting different kinds of bread, learning a modern language and theme days. They also gain much enjoyment from playing in the yard. In lessons, when their interest is caught, children are attentive and willing to participate in discussion. They are confident in putting forward their views and in dealing with visitors to the school. They value the opportunities they have to take responsibility and take this seriously. They have a good understanding of what makes a healthy lifestyle, make healthy choices at lunchtime and break and are keen to participate in games and sports activities. They have a good understanding about how to stay safe and make a good contribution towards eliminating bullying in the school through the school council and through the 'playground pals' system. Attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is too variable to ensure that all children achieve well. There are many effective elements in the teaching. Children are well motivated as a result of the teacher explaining what they are going to learn. Children rapidly understand new ideas as a result of clear presentations and they build effectively on previous learning because lessons are planned to provide them with a series of short, manageable steps. The growing use of computerised whiteboards engages the children and supports their learning. Learning is slower when the pace of the lesson is too slow or too fast. Assessment information is not always used effectively enough to ensure children of all abilities can succeed and are effectively challenged. As a result children find tasks too difficult or too easy. Where activities are led by the teacher for lengthy periods, children have too little opportunity to explore ideas for themselves or to discuss their ideas with others. When given the opportunity to evaluate their own work and decide on next steps they respond positively. However, they are not all involved in this kind of activity and consequently are not all sure about how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is enriched by a range of activities such as French, sports, music, dance and visits. The school effectively promotes the importance of healthy living, and outdoor play areas are used well for games and sports. In the Nursery and Reception classes play is used effectively to promote learning and to develop children's personal, social and communication skills. Circle time and the personal, social and health education programme (PHSCE) are used effectively to promote children's personal development. The 'Pirates' project in the Reception class engages children's interest and effectively develops communication and writing skills through constructive play and, at the same time, successfully eliminates worries about moving up into Year 1. Theme days and school productions promote children's interest and enjoyment. However, the curriculum is not planned effectively enough to develop pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy across all subjects. There is scope for improvement in the development of basic skills, to prepare them better for the next phase of education and for their future economic well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school judges care, guidance and support to be good; inspectors judge them to be satisfactory. Many aspects of pastoral care are particularly strong. The school works hard, in partnership with other schools and agencies, to ensure children feel safe. All children are confident they could find someone to talk to in school if they have a problem and they are actively involved in eliminating bullying. Child protection arrangements are robust and regularly reviewed. Health and safety procedures follow government guidelines. Effective strategies are in place to identify and help children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teaching assistants play a key role in helping these pupils make satisfactory progress, with outside agencies being consulted when appropriate. Procedures have been developed to monitor all pupils' achievements, and standards are rising as a result. However, assessment information is not yet used consistently across the school to guide pupils accurately about how they can improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The senior leadership team has a clear understanding of most of the strengths and areas for improvement and the self-evaluation process takes account of the views of parents, teachers and children. The detailed analysis of assessment information forms the basis for forward planning. However, although the monitoring of teaching and learning is regular and identifies areas for development, information gained from this process is not used effectively enough to spread good practice and eliminate variability across the school. The role of middle leaders in the process of monitoring, self-evaluation and planning is underdeveloped. Middle leaders do not always work effectively as a team and this results in some variability in practice across the school and some lack of focus in strategic planning. The school works well with outside agencies and with other schools to eliminate barriers to children's learning and to ensure a smooth transition from one stage to the next. Governors are well informed and provide satisfactory support and challenge.

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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>	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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
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.

Annex A

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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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

Inspection of Alkrington Primary School, Manchester, M24 1JZ

On behalf of the team I would like to thank you for making us so welcome and for helping us when we visited your school. You really enjoy your school because you get on so well with your teachers and there are many exciting things to do and learn. You are looked after very well and your behaviour is good. We were particularly impressed by the way you look after each other in the playground. You know about healthy eating and how important regular exercise is. You were clearly enjoying using the equipment in the playground and practising your dancing.

We noticed that some of you found some tasks too difficult or too easy in your lessons. We have asked the teachers to make sure they think carefully when they are planning their lessons to make sure you can all succeed and do your best. You can help by telling teachers when you find tasks too easy or too difficult. We also noticed how much you enjoy investigating things for yourselves and discussing your ideas with each other. We have asked your teachers to try to give you more opportunities to do this.

Teachers have a lot of good ideas but in some lessons you learn better than in others. We have asked the teachers to get together to swap their ideas so that all your lessons are as good as the best. They have been working hard to help you do better in your mathematics and English and this has been successful. We think you can do even better so we have asked them to find ways you can practise your writing and mathematics in other subjects.

You play an important role in making your school as good as it is. You take pride in your work and your achievements. We hope you carry on enjoying your learning. We wish you every success in the future.