

Little Heaton Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105812
Local Authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	287338
Inspection dates	25–26 April 2007
Reporting inspector	John Heap

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	147
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Alison Burrows
Headteacher	Mrs Lindsay Addington
Date of previous school inspection	15 April 2002
School address	Boardman Lane Middleton Manchester M24 4PU
Telephone number	0161 6434882
Fax number	0161 6435880

Age group	5–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This smaller than average primary school serves a mainly White British population. It has a small proportion of pupils from other minority ethnic backgrounds. It serves several residential areas, among these some pockets of disadvantage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Pupils in the Foundation Stage, Year 1 and Year 2 are taught in mixed-age classes. The school has been through a relatively lengthy period of disruption caused by staffing changes. As a result, the local authority identified it as a school causing concern. The school has Healthy School and ActiveMark status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school which provides sound value for money. The strong leadership and direction of the headteacher has promoted improvement and greater stability after an unsettled period. Consequently, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory, the capacity to improve further is satisfactory and the local authority no longer judges it to be a school causing concern. This improving picture led the school to judge itself as good, but it is not there yet. Nevertheless, the school provides a warm and welcoming learning environment which is much appreciated by pupils and their parents.

Pupils' good personal development is the result of the effective, caring ethos and strong elements in an otherwise satisfactory curriculum. Pupils clearly enjoy school, and attitudes to learning are good. Older pupils relish helping the youngsters and this is a major part of the effective contribution pupils make in the school. Pupils have a good understanding of how to maintain a healthy and safe lifestyle and the national awards the school has received further endorse this.

Teachers work hard and the quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is some inconsistency, with the best work being done in Years 3 to 6. Consequently, pupils make good progress in these years, compared to the satisfactory progress in Foundation Stage (Reception) and Years 1 and 2. Children enter Reception with weak skills in literacy, some areas of mathematical development, and knowledge and understanding of the world. Satisfactory provision means they make adequate gains, but standards are still lower than the expected level as pupils enter Year 1. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2. National test results have remained consistently below average at Year 2, but the year groups have been quite small with relatively large proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. By Year 6, standards are average. There is an upturn in the trend of national test results in the last two years, particularly in mathematics where the 2006 results clearly exceeded the school's targets. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from effective support and make good progress towards their targets. However, the inconsistency in progress in parts of the school means that achievement overall is satisfactory.

Effective systems are being developed to assess and track pupils' attainment and progress. The use of the information is strongest in Years 3 to 6 and plays a large part in pupils making the most progress there. These systems are used less well in Years 1 and 2 and, therefore, tasks are not always matched accurately to pupils' ability and needs. Moreover, across the school marking practices are not used consistently to plan the next stages of learning or to show pupils how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. The headteacher's good leadership has, for example, resulted in good signs of improving standards in Year 6. Management is not as effective, particularly in school improvement planning. The school knows what it wants to improve because self-evaluation is satisfactory but the indicators of progress and success are not challenging enough for all teachers. Governance is satisfactory. Governors provide good support, but their evaluation of the school has shortcomings. Financial management is prudent and there are appropriate plans to use the surplus.

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.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards at the end of Year 2, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Improve the use of assessment, tracking and marking so that pupils are consistently challenged by tasks and know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further.
- Make school improvement planning more challenging to all teachers.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall achievement is satisfactory. Children in Reception make satisfactory progress but standards remain below expectations by the time they enter Year 1. Good gains are made in early writing, shape, space and measures, and the development of independent learning skills. This owes much to the good balance between teacher-led and child-led activities.

By the end of Year 2, standards have been consistently below average. This is mainly because of disruptions to teaching and small numbers in year groups with significant proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Nevertheless, there have been small gains recently in reading and mathematics, particularly in the proportion of pupils getting the higher than average Level 3. Writing results continue to lag behind because of shortcomings in the curriculum and the inconsistent use of assessment and marking to challenge pupils. By the end of Year 6, standards are average and pupils make good progress, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds. National test results have improved well since the low in 2003 and trends are upward, particularly for the higher-attaining pupils. The school is right to identify the use of 'booster' groups as a factor in these developments, particularly in mathematics. Girls do better than boys and this has led to a rethink about resources and styles of teaching and learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the effective strategies designed for them. In fact, in 2005 several pupils achieved average standards at the end of Year 6 from a below average position in Year 2.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils maintain a positive outlook and enjoy school and learning. They show a lot of respect for staff and visitors. Strong relationships promote the happy, caring ethos in the school. Pupils feel safe at school and say that there is always another pupil or an adult to turn to if there is a need. For example, older pupils take responsibility for the youngsters when they become play leaders. In this, and through the active school council, pupils contribute well to the running of the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, and social development are good. Moral and social development is particularly obvious in pupils' good behaviour, both in lessons and at other times. Bullying or racism are not issues for the school. Pupils are aware that others have greater needs and they are keen to raise money for several charities, including Action Aid. However, pupils' cultural development is only satisfactory because they could know and understand more about the diverse nature of our society. Pupils are conscious of the need to exercise and eat healthily and the school council has successfully made representations to the caterers for healthier lunch options. Pupils' good attitudes and satisfactory academic achievement means they are soundly prepared for future schooling and life. Attendance is satisfactory and improved.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are strongest in Years 3 to 6 and this promotes good academic progress for most of these pupils. A significant feature is the way that staff are developing good knowledge and understanding of how assessment is used successfully to set challenging targets for pupils. This is less effective elsewhere in school. The quality of marking is also better in Years 3 to 6 than in other parts of the school, but is inconsistent even in these classes. As a result, pupils are not always clear about how well they are doing and what they need to do to progress further. Typical features of the teaching and learning include effective classroom management which results in good behaviour and minimal interruptions to learning. Basic English and mathematical skills are taught diligently and help pupils overcome the early low standards. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well by effective strategies, and they progress well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The satisfactory curriculum promotes personal development well and academic achievement soundly. Where there are classes with more than one age group the 'rolling programme' ensures that there is very little repetition of work. Pupils enjoy the satisfactory range of activities that enrich and broaden the curriculum. These include the opportunities provided by external providers, such as musicians who contribute to the school's growing musical strength. The school recognises that there ought to be a wider range of links between subjects and to this end there has been a rearrangement and linking of subjects in the afternoon. Consequently, the use and development of literacy skills is good in Years 3 to 6. It is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 because there is an over-reliance on prepared worksheets that reduce significantly the opportunities to write at length. The use and development of information and communication technology is underdeveloped, but improving. For example, there are increasing opportunities for pupils to use the internet for research and to develop multimedia presentations.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Staff know the pupils and their families well. Effective monitoring of behaviour and attendance has led to improvements in both, and innovative action has been taken, such as setting up the breakfast club, to encourage latecomers to arrive early. Where there have been problems, advice and guidance have been successfully sought from effective outside agencies. Procedures and practices for safeguarding pupils, child protection and assessing risk are robust and give parents and pupils confidence that the youngsters are safe and well looked after. Sound links with pre-school providers and secondary schools enable induction and transition to proceed smoothly. Academic guidance and support are underpinned by satisfactory and improving assessment procedures. Information is used soundly by teachers in their planning of lessons to challenge pupils, with the strongest practice in Years 3 to 6. As a result, progress accelerates in these years.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

After a difficult and disrupted period the school is once again moving forward. Improvements in standards, attendance and teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 are the result of good leadership by the headteacher. Her direction for the school is very clear, but the management of improvement is only satisfactory. For example, not all staff are made sufficiently aware of their responsibilities in promoting the increased pace of pupils' academic progress. Also, targets for pupils' achievements are not identified for all year groups. In turn, this prevents the school from having a sharp picture of what works well to raise standards and meet targets. Key staff and subject coordinators are doing better work than previously because the level and quality of their monitoring of data and provision is improving and is guiding them towards priorities for development. Governors support the school well, but they are too reliant on the school's management for the information they need. As a result, they do not have a searching method to evaluate the school's work.

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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?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
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	2

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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I enjoyed visiting your school this week and found it to be satisfactory. I appreciated very much the warm welcome, courtesy and help that you provided.

What I found positive about your school was that:

- the improvements in English, mathematics and science standards for 11-year-olds over the last couple of years
- the good support the school gives pupils who find learning more difficult and the good progress these pupils make
- the particularly strong moral and social development that leads to good behaviour, good attitudes to school and work and strong relationships
- the improved attendance and the way the breakfast club has helped to reduce latecoming
- the good range of activities that enrich your personal development, such as visitors who provide sporting and safety expertise
- the contribution you all make to a safe and caring ethos in the school, such as the way older pupils help the youngsters settle in
- the good leadership of the headteacher which has helped the school to settle after a difficult period.

I have asked your teachers to make sure that Year 2 pupils do even better in reading, writing and mathematics. I have also said to them that although there have been good improvements in the assessment of your work, these need to be used more widely, so that you are all fully challenged in lessons. Moreover, marking will give you a clear idea of how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve.

Finally, I have asked that the plan for improving the school includes learning targets for each year group. I am certain that you will want to help in all of this by working hard, always doing your best work and following the advice from your teachers. Through the school council you may also make a contribution to future planning.