

## Atherton St George's CofE Primary School

### Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	130300
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wigan
<b>Inspection number</b>	293620
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 April 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Janette Corlett

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>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	178
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rev Dr Buckley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Rachael Britner
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 March 2003
<b>School address</b>	Derby Street Atherton Manchester Lancashire M46 0HJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01942 883971
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This small school takes most of its pupils from a large housing estate of rented properties surrounding the school. A high proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals and many pupils do not start or finish their primary education in the school. The majority of pupils entering the Reception class have no prior experience of nursery education. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly above that found in most schools nationally. The school appointed a new headteacher in September 2006.

## 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 is moving forwards quickly under the leadership of the recently appointed headteacher. She has recognised the full potential of pupils and staff and has the vision and determination to ensure future high standards in academic and personal development. Pupils currently make satisfactory progress. Most pupils enter the school in the Reception class with standards below those usually expected of children of this age and leave at the end of Year 6 with standards below the national average. This is because the quality of teaching, academic guidance and curriculum are satisfactory overall.

Since taking up post in September 2006 the headteacher has set the scene for raising standards and achievement throughout the school and has begun embedding systems to track pupils' progress so that individuals or groups of pupils achieve as much as they should. This means that appropriate intervention is increasingly available through the school's established team of support professionals.

The great majority of parents and carers are very supportive of the school and appreciate the 'open door' policy, which makes them feel welcome and that their views are important and valued in the school community. Many parents were keen to point out how effectively the school had dealt with infrequent incidences of bullying, whilst proactively maintaining effective levels of communication with everyone involved. Parents also reflect the comments, 'Teachers are approachable and they listen to parents' views' and 'The school has given our son a greater confidence in his own abilities'. Consequently, pupils feel safe in school and know that there is always someone to help them. They say that teachers 'listen to what we say' and 'if we are sad they comfort us'. There are many opportunities for pupils to help other people and contribute to the community at large but, as yet, standards in English, mathematics and science are not high enough to enable them to be as well prepared for their future adult life as they could be.

The school has good capacity for rapid improvement because the staff have clear direction and have embraced change to support improvement in pupils' personal development and academic progress. Although senior leaders and managers are taking an increasingly strategic role in moving the school forward, there has not yet been time for their actions to impact on the standards pupils reach by the end of Year 6. Teaching and the tracking of pupils' progress have improved recently: this is beginning to raise standards and achievement. However, the pace in some lessons is too slow and does not provide enough challenge for all groups of pupils, particularly the most able and boys. This means that learners lose concentration and progress is not as good as it could be. The elements of good teaching are not yet consistent across the whole school. 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 throughout the school so that all pupils achieve to their full potential.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good or better throughout the school.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Achievement is satisfactory. Children's attainment on entering the school is below that expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. They make satisfactory progress throughout the school, reaching standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Years 2 and 6 which are below the national average. Boys do not make as much progress as girls and more able pupils do not always achieve as much as they could. Standards are now beginning to rise in speaking and listening and writing because of the strategies the school has recently introduced to accelerate progress. School leaders are working hard to raise teachers' expectations and lift barriers to learning so that all pupils are enabled to achieve to the very best of their abilities. Following poor results in science at the end of Year 6, in 2006, standards are improving due to better teaching in this subject.

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

### **Grade: 3**

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is satisfactory. Opportunities for spiritual development through prayer and reflection are a strength. Behaviour is satisfactory and pupils treat each other with respect. Opportunities are sometimes missed, however, to capture pupils' interest creatively and engage them more practically in lessons to develop life-long learning skills. Attendance has improved and is now broadly in line with the national average. This is because of the school's recent efforts to support parents in giving their children the best possible start in life and to motivate pupils to attend regularly and be punctual. Parents speak very positively about the way in which they are welcomed into school. The headteacher and her staff encourage communication, and concerns are always taken seriously and appropriate action taken. Pupils adopt a healthy lifestyle and take part in the many active sports on offer both in lessons and after school. The school council has made a difference to the school by suggesting changes to the playground and the 'SOS' boxes for pupils' concerns, which are placed in each classroom. Councillors speak very positively about their school. They are keen fundraisers and children's charities in particular benefit from their generosity. Pupils contributed successfully to the development of a mission statement to include the words, 'safe and valued' and 'listen and support each other'. This accurately reflects the school's caring character.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Satisfactory teaching in the Foundation Stage provides children with a secure start to school life. Satisfactory teaching and learning continues in Years 1 to 6 enabling pupils to make adequate progress. There is a range of additional support for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities which generally helps them achieve their targets. The quality of teaching across the school, however, is inconsistent. In some lessons, for example, independent activities are not sufficiently challenging to engage pupils' interest and help them to enjoy achieving to the very best of their abilities. In a number of lessons, pupils make good progress because they are excited by vibrant and enthusiastic teaching. In these good lessons pupils are more involved and positive about their learning. Learning moves on quickly when there are clear objectives and pupils know what is expected of them. This good practice is beginning to spread across

the school. Not all pupils are aware of how they are doing in their work or how to improve. In some lessons, pupils spend too long listening rather than developing their skills and understanding. This results in pupils becoming restless, losing concentration and not learning as well as they could.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory and includes good features, particularly in relation to enriching pupils' lives. Specialist teaching in music and sport is very popular and increases pupils' enjoyment of learning whilst developing in them a real sense of pride in their school community. The choir, of almost 100 pupils, gave a choral performance at a locally renowned football stadium. Pupils benefit from a wide range of outside visits and visitors to school. There are strong links with the local high school, which provides specialist tuition and opportunities for gifted and talented pupils together with the opportunity to take part in lessons on site, for example, curling!

The headteacher is determined to match the curriculum in lessons to the needs of all groups of pupils. To this end she has driven forward a curriculum re-organisation to develop a personalised approach to every child's learning. This is not yet fully embedded, although there are signs that it is prompting teachers to offer more challenging activities and to avoid repetition in lessons.

Improved information and communication technology resources are supporting teaching and learning through the effective use of interactive whiteboards and timetabled lessons in the new computer suite. The provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The children begin school life in a calm atmosphere where they feel safe and secure. Provision for outside play is adequate but the lack of a covered area prevents continuous access to the outdoor curriculum regardless of the weather conditions.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Staff know their pupils well. Procedures for child protection and health and safety routines are firmly in place and known to staff. Good links with outside agencies make an appreciable contribution to pupils' well-being. Pupils feel safe and secure because staff are very caring and sensitive to the needs of the most vulnerable pupils. Good support enables smooth transfer for pupils when they go to their next schools. The recently introduced system for tracking pupils' progress means that teachers have more information on which to plan the next steps in pupils' learning. However, systems for individual target setting are not yet firmly established in the classroom routines. Marking does not always help pupils know how to improve their work. Through their determination to identify and remove barriers to learning, teachers and support staff have brought in a wide range of strategies to support vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Systems for monitoring the progress of these pupils are not yet secure and the activities set do not always enable them to make accelerated progress.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Strong and determined leadership from the recently appointed headteacher, together with her passionate belief that every child can succeed and make good progress are helping the school to move forward rapidly. High expectations and clear vision have led the school to begin a challenging and adventurous programme of renewal which make its capacity to improve good. Due to the short length of time the headteacher has been in post, however, new systems are not yet sufficiently embedded to show a measurable impact on standards and pupils' progress. Other school leaders and managers have been encouraged to develop their skills in monitoring and evaluating progress, but have not yet had sufficient time to make an impact in raising standards and ensuring rapid identification of pupils who are underachieving.

The school's own evaluation of its performance gives an overall realistic picture of provision, but is sometimes too generous in its judgements. Whilst there is strong evidence of a genuine desire to improve, and the school is clearly aware of how to do so, there is still some work to be done to bring about the good and outstanding judgements it aspires to. Parents speak very positively about the way in which they are welcomed into school. The headteacher and her staff encourage communication and concerns are always taken seriously and appropriate action taken.

The governors discharge their statutory duties satisfactorily, for example, holding the school to account for its deployment of staff and resources. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

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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>	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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

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

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

<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>	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**

You may remember that Mrs Cordey and I visited your school recently to see how you are coming along with your learning and to find out about the things you enjoy doing in school. We really enjoyed talking to you and watching some of your lessons. Thank you for being so very polite and helpful during our visit. It was especially good to see so many of you playing happily in the school grounds. We know you would like to have more equipment to play on and have asked your teachers to think about this. Perhaps you might have some ideas on fundraising for this, which you might suggest to them through your school council?

You obviously feel very safe in school and that all the adults there are kind and care for you. We were also impressed with all the things you do to be healthy, including taking lots of exercise and eating foods which are good for you.

Your school is satisfactory. We have asked your school to do the following things to help you do even better.

- Help you reach higher standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Make sure that all the lessons are of the same good quality.

Some of the older pupils told us how they would like to be vets, teachers and even premier league football players one day. How very exciting! This means you need to try very hard in all your lessons, listening carefully to your teachers and always make sure that each piece of work is the very best you can do.

Thank you again for making us feel so welcome in your school. We wish you all the very best for your future.