

Old Hall Drive Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130394
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	301809
Inspection dates	3–4 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Angela Westington HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	386
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Rachel Daniel
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Gornell
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2006
School address	Old Hall Drive Gorton Manchester M18 7FU
Telephone number	0161 223 2805
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Old Hall Primary is larger than the average primary school and is situated in the eastern part of Manchester, three miles outside the city centre. It serves an area that is socially and economically very disadvantaged. Almost two thirds of its pupils are eligible for free school meals - an exceptionally high proportion compared to the national figure. Twenty per cent of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities which is average and three have statements of educational need. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage but the proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds, at almost one third, is increasing. The percentage of pupils at the early stages of learning English, currently around 20%, is also rising. A small number of pupils are refugees or asylum seekers. Two pupils are in local authority care.

The school has gained the Active School Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Since being made subject to special measures in February 2006, Old Hall Primary School has made rapid progress in tackling the issues highlighted as cause for concern at that time. Therefore, in accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

The leadership and management of the school are now good. The headteacher provides excellent direction and stewardship for the school and has a very clear vision for its future. She is well supported by her very able deputy and the leadership team that she is building. She has established a culture focused on identifying and meeting pupils' needs, the result of which has been the drive to raise teachers' expectations and force standards upwards. The staff work in a more focused manner with common aims. The governing body is much stronger than it was and is now good. It performs its duties well in holding the school to account for the standards it now achieves and the improvements set in motion. The school therefore has good capacity to improve further.

Standards are rising across the school, although they are still below average by the time pupils leave at age eleven. All pupils are making better progress than they have done for a long time. In Key Stage 1 and Years 5 and 6 pupils make good progress and, as a result, are making up lost ground and catching up rapidly on the underachievement that has existed for some years. Elsewhere in the school, the rates of progress are satisfactory overall, but not consistent, with pupils in Years 3 and 4 making less progress than they could be.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, but variable. There are examples of good and better teaching, mainly in Key Stage 1 and Years 5 and 6, that directly impact on the rates of progress that pupils make. Not all teachers mark pupils' work to the same level of rigour and consistency; pupils are aware of this and know that they make better progress when they are given a clear indication of how to improve their work.

The curriculum is satisfactory and has improved substantially from a very low base. There is an increasing range of visits and extra-curricular activities planned for pupils which they enjoy. The environment around the school has been improved considerably with high quality displays of pupils' work. The school is now a much pleasanter and safer place to be.

Adults now take effective steps to make sure pupils are safe and well. The perimeter fencing has been replaced, procedures for greeting and welcoming pupils into school daily have been improved, breakfast and family clubs established, as well as strong links with support agencies. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at the early stages of learning English is good. As a result, they are now making satisfactory progress.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. They enjoy their lessons more than they did and they recognise their own improvements and those taking place in the school generally. Attendance is much improved but, despite the school's best endeavours, is still below the national average. Punctuality remains an issue for concern, with a small number of families accounting for a large proportion of recorded late marks.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in the core subjects in both key stages.
- Improve the quality of teaching overall to that of the best.
- Improve punctuality at the start of the school day.

- Improve the quality and consistency of marking so that pupils are aware of how they are doing in their work and what to do to make it better.

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 time pupils leave the school at age eleven, standards are still below average but they are improving. They are improving most quickly from the bottom of the school upwards. Despite their very low skill levels on entry to the school, this year more children than ever are leaving the Foundation Stage having reached the expected levels for this age group. The school's data show that the proportions attaining the expected levels for aspects of early reading, writing and number are now around the national figure. This is a substantial improvement on previous years and reflects the sustained focus on these areas and improvements in teaching in the Foundation Stage.

Standards in Key Stage 1 are also rising and pupils in both Years 1 and 2 have made significant gains in reading and writing compared to previous years. More pupils are reaching the higher levels than was previously the case, especially girls.

Standards by the end of Key Stage 2 are still below national averages in the core subjects, but they are now no longer well below, reflecting the work that has been done on reducing the tail of underachievement with these pupils. Early indications are that in this year's national tests for eleven years olds, the school's results have moved up to the minimum level set by the government, a large jump on the previous year and a continuation of the upward trend from an exceptionally low level some years ago. Standards are higher in Years 5 and 6; they are lower in Years 3 and 4 reflecting the variability of teaching that these classes have had.

Pupils' achievement is improving as their rates of progress pick up. Not surprisingly, they make better progress where there is better teaching. The most rapid gains in progress can be seen in Key Stage 1 and Years 5 and 6. Many pupils have made dramatic gains in reading as a response to the intensive efforts in this area. In Key Stage 1, the improvement in pupils' writing is outstanding. The school knows that the challenge it now faces is to sustain the improvements into Key Stage 2 and embed them across all classes. The variability of teaching in Key Stage 2 means that pupils' progress falters.

The greater focus on better quality teaching for all pupils means that those pupils who genuinely need additional support, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who are at the early stages of learning English, are identified earlier and provided with better targeted support. Consequently, they now make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils make satisfactory progress in their personal development and have a growing understanding of the need for healthy lifestyles and how to keep safe. Throughout the school relationships between pupils are improving and in the main they are good. They have a growing pride in their achievements and a greater readiness to learn and work together, because as the oldest pupils state, 'lessons are now more interesting and fun and you want to do your best'.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and the greater emphasis on social and moral development is paying dividends. Behaviour has improved and there are no longer incidences of serious misbehaviour leading to exclusion. This academic year, for the first time in several years, there have been no exclusions. Most pupils are cooperative in class. They have a growing understanding of the need for self-discipline: 'You must show respect for teachers so that you can listen and learn,' is a frequent comment. Nevertheless, a small minority of pupils sometimes show a lack of respect and are reluctant to engage in lessons. This is usually when the teaching is mediocre and lacks excitement and verve. In these instances unacceptable behaviour is not tackled firmly enough and consequently the pace of learning slows. The behaviour of a few pupils at lunchtime is sometimes thoughtless. The adults on duty do not readily engage pupils in activities or encourage them to develop good social friendships.

The school council continues to meet regularly and members feel their views are listened to and acted upon. As yet, pupils generally have too few opportunities to take on responsibilities that will enhance their understanding of citizenship and prepare them for life beyond school. Although their achievement in literacy and numeracy is improving there is more to be done to equip them with the skills that will prepare them effectively for their future economic well-being.

Levels of attendance have greatly improved and are contributing to pupils' improved academic progress. The overall rate is still below most schools nationally but this is despite the school's strenuous efforts and rigorous monitoring systems. Lateness in a morning continues to be a concern, although this too has improved. The start of the school day is five to nine, yet large numbers of pupils drift into classrooms until around ten past nine and frequently later. Dramatic improvements have been made in specific weeks when the school has offered incentives, such as the Easter egg raffle, but these are not sustained. A small but significant minority of parents do not support the school's rigorous drive to ensure all pupils attend regularly and on time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall but it is variable. It includes some examples of good and better teaching. The better teaching is leading to pupils making better progress, particularly in Key Stage 1 and Years 5 and 6. Teaching is strongest in mathematics and English where the school has placed most emphasis. Planning in these lessons matches the needs of all the individuals, who learn more because they are actively involved and clearly understand the point of the work. Some lessons include outstanding aspects which enable pupils to make more rapid progress in improving their standards. For example, in a Year 5/6 lesson observed, pupils extended their vocabulary and improved their expressive writing by tasting a wide range of food from Africa.

Better use of information and communication technology (ICT) has enabled pupils to be more involved in planning and shaping their learning. This is because they can adapt, change and re-order their thoughts through the use of the interactive whiteboards. A dip in pupils' achievement and standards in Years 3 and 4 reflects more variable teaching. Improved learning for these pupils is the school's next priority. The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and some pupils are not sure of how they are doing in their work or exactly what to do in order to make it better. Pupils are aware of differences in the quality and extent of marking and comment upon its varying degrees of helpfulness. Where there is good teaching and high expectations the pupils take pride in their work and this is reflected in better writing and presentation.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has improved dramatically in the last year and is now better placed to provide a match to the individual needs of the pupils. Good displays celebrate pupils' work and model examples of work of the highest standards. This reinforces most pupils' pride in their work and the high expectations of staff who want the best for them.

The development work to link subjects across the curriculum continues. The most obvious impact of this is in the improvement made in pupils' writing through drawing on lessons in drama and history, for example. The work is still at an early stage and the school's vision is that this will lead to greater pupil enjoyment and overlap between subjects. Resources for ICT have improved and pupils use hardware and software skilfully to improve the standard of their work in all subjects.

Concerted efforts by the staff and governors have increased the number and range of trips available. Pupils relish their time at outdoor pursuits centres. Visits and visitors to the school have also increased, much to the delight of the pupils. Sports activities on offer after school include basketball, football and athletics. The school has gained the Active Sports Mark.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils say they trust adults who work in the school and know there is someone to whom they can turn to for help should they need it. Pupils speak positively about how much behaviour has improved although some express concerns that instances of bullying are not always dealt with effectively enough, especially at lunchtimes.

Most teachers know pupils well and, because relationships are more secure, they encourage pupils to try their best and offer praise at frequent intervals. As a result pupils say this gives them the confidence to tackle new and unfamiliar tasks. The family worker plays a pivotal role in caring for pupils' social and emotional well-being and often their families too. Consequently, the most vulnerable pupils are well supported.

Child protection procedures and those to safeguard individuals and ensure their health and welfare are robust and meet current requirements. Induction arrangements help the youngest children and those who start part way through the year to settle quickly into school routines. Arrangements to admit pupils who are at an early stage of learning English are much improved and the school is now able to tailor support to meet their needs well. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Skilled and sensitive intervention and support enables these pupils to achieve as well as other groups.

Teachers are becoming more adept at helping pupils to understand how to improve their work. Pupils comment that the displays on the walls give them 'clues' on how to improve work and what they should aim for. The marking of work and the setting of targets are getting better, but are not consistent. The best practice is not yet shared fully so that in all classes pupils have a very precise understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. This is confirmed by pupils themselves, who say marking is often very helpful in literacy but much less so in numeracy.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the school are now good. With her quiet, gentle manner and steely determination, the headteacher provides outstanding leadership for the school. She is uncompromising in her resolve to improve the provision for pupils. In this task, she is well supported by her very able deputy and the increasingly strong leadership team that she is building. Together, they have moved the school forward at a rapid pace so that it is now in a position to drive up standards further.

The headteacher is not afraid to make and act upon difficult staffing decisions in the quest to ensure that the school provides the best teaching it can. As a result, the profile of teaching across the school is improving as is the expertise of staff in a number of areas; for example, in the emerging good practice in the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at the early stages of learning English. The local authority support for these areas has been particularly good.

Members of the senior leadership team fulfil their roles well. They take significant responsibility for major areas of the curriculum and provision and hold others accountable for results. The headteacher has required the next tier of managers, subject and other leaders, to develop their roles and skills and take on responsibility also. This has been a very steep learning curve, yet one that they have responded to with grace and a willingness to learn. Consequently, a raft of procedures and systems have been introduced to sharpen teaching and learning across the school and to tighten the monitoring of pupils' progress. At all levels now, leaders are focused on pupils' outcomes, are aware of the extents of their responsibilities and share a common purpose.

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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	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?	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	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
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	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	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

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

As you know, I visited your school recently with two other inspectors and I would like to thank you for talking to us and making us feel so welcome.

We looked at many of the things you do in school and talked with your teachers and some of the people who help you. We think that you are working hard and trying hard and we were really pleased to see this. We were delighted to see that your work is getting better all the time so we have decided that your school no longer needs the help that we call 'special measures'. This means that we are confident that your headteacher and teachers can do what needs to be done without our help. These are some of the things that we liked most.

- Your headteacher, Mrs Gornell, is outstanding. She works extremely hard to make the school as good as it can possibly be for you.
- The teachers and all the adults in your school are working very hard too, to make the school better than it was and to help you do well.
- The adults look after you and they care about you. They make sure you are safe.
- Your reading is getting better; some of you have made fantastic improvement in your reading. Well done!
- The writing that the children in Key Stage 1 can now do is great. It was lovely to see it. You should be really proud of yourselves.
- There are more interesting things for you to do in lessons and on trips. We enjoyed hearing about the trip to Ghyll Head and how the people there thought you were very well behaved. That's marvellous.

There are still things to do though to help your school get even better. We have asked Mrs Gornell and the teachers to make sure that all of you get to higher levels in your work, especially English, mathematics and science. To do this, they will have to make sure that all the teaching is as good as the best teaching we saw in the school. We have also asked them to make sure that all the teachers mark your work well so that you know how you can make it better. When they do this we are sure that you will help them by continuing to work hard.

There is one more thing: some of you still do not come to school every day, but that is getting better. However, many of you still come to school late and miss parts of your lessons. It is really important to get to school on time, so please ask your parents to help you to be in the playground for five to nine. Mrs Gornell and the teachers will be encouraging you to do this, too.