

Moston Fields Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105427
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	308855
Inspection dates	31 October –1 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Angela Westington HMI

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	339
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms D Kelly
Headteacher	Mr H Bahra
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2003
School address	Brookside Road Moston Manchester M40 9GN
Telephone number	0161 681 1801
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school situated on the outskirts of Moston to the north of Manchester City centre. The school draws its pupils from a wider area than the immediate locality. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average and few are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Three pupils currently have a statement of special educational need.

The school holds the Healthy Schools Award at Gold Level and also the Manchester Inclusion Standard Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with legislation, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. The school provides unsatisfactory value for money.

Since 2002 the trend in the standards reached by pupils at the school has been downwards. The school's results in the 2007 national tests and assessments in both Key Stage 1 and 2 showed a further decline overall and a further reduction in the rate of progress made by pupils. For a number of years the school's Key Stage 2 results have been below the national minimum set by government. In 2007, there was a small increase in the proportion of pupils gaining the target Level 4 or above in English, but there was a further decline in mathematics. As a result, the school is now positioned within the bottom 5% of all schools nationally for the amount of progress pupils make over time. The school benefits from a relatively stable pupil population.

Leadership and management are inadequate because the headteacher and other senior staff, despite their best intentions, have been unable to stem the decline. Actions to tackle the problems have been taken too late and are not sharply enough focused. Senior leaders have not identified some crucial areas that need improving and they have an over-generous view of the work of the school and the quality of teaching and learning. There are significant gaps in whole-school systems across a range of functions: administrative, financial and educational. There is too much reliance on external support to establish the systems and procedures that should have been in place a long time ago. Governance is inadequate. Governors do not receive the information they need, to make decisions and judge the impact of the school's work, in a timely and systematic fashion.

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate overall to raise standards quickly enough. There is too much unsatisfactory teaching and too little teaching that is good or better. Teachers' skill in assessing pupils' levels of understanding to move them on to the next level is weak. In some instances, subject knowledge is also weak. Despite this, pupils enjoy school and enjoy their lessons.

The curriculum is satisfactory. The school has devoted a lot of time and energy to reviewing its curriculum, in line with government recommendations, to make lessons more interesting and to develop links across subjects where possible. This has resulted in pupils' greater enjoyment but there has not been a corresponding focus on developing rigour and achieving excellence. In particular, the significant weaknesses in the core skills of literacy and numeracy undermine the work done elsewhere by the school.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and is a positive starting point for improving their academic achievement. Moston Fields is a friendly, welcoming school and parents are pleased that their children enjoy school. Attendance, which was an area for improvement following the last inspection, has improved and is now in line with the national average.

The care, guidance and support offered to pupils are satisfactory overall but academic guidance is inadequate. Whole-school systems for monitoring pupils' progress and targeting their future performance are embryonic. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory

progress because of the recently introduced procedures for identifying their stages of development, providing better matched teaching and more accurately monitoring their progress.

The school has made some progress on the areas for improvement that were identified at its last inspection in 2003. Attendance is now satisfactory and provision for the Reception pupils is better than it was. However, the use of assessment and standards in writing remain issues. The decline in standards shows that the school lacks the capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The school reports that when children enter the Nursery their skills and understanding are well below those expected for this age group. However, inspectors disagree. The children present a range of skills and understanding which, in the main, is not significantly different from what one might expect. The children get off to a sound start in a structured environment where all are valued and cared for. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and relationships are strong. The teaching assistants are particularly knowledgeable. The children settle quickly into routines, behave well and enjoy their learning. They treat each other kindly and enjoy taking responsibility. In line with Manchester schools, Moston Fields benefits from being able to offer full-time pre-school education for three-year-olds. For some children this means they may spend up to 18 months, full time, in the Nursery. Although the Nursery provision takes account of the ages of the children in its planning, it is not always sufficiently focused on the intellectual development of the more able children, who are marking time before they move into Reception. In addition, although the school reports increased numbers of children joining the school with poor language skills, there has been no rigorous attempt to analyse the nature of this paucity and adapt the planning to provide compensatory provision and bring children's speech up to a better standard, despite having the full-time provision to do this.

Teaching and learning in Reception are satisfactory. The planning takes into account the required six areas of learning and children receive their entitlement to a daily structured phonics session, in line with government recommendations. There is a noticeable progression from Nursery to Reception. However, in the lessons observed, the pace of learning was not fast enough, especially for the more able children. When they move into Year 1 the standards reached by the children are below those expected.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 2 and in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1 and increase the rates of progress for all pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching across the school to increase the proportion of good and better teaching.
- Improve teachers' knowledge and skill in assessing pupils and using this information to plan lessons better matched to pupils' abilities.
- Improve governance so that governors are able to hold the school to account for the standards it achieves and the rates of pupils' progress.
- Improve leadership and management at all levels so that the action taken is more effective and consistent in improving pupils' learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Standards and pupils' achievement are inadequate at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. They are satisfactory at the end of the Foundation Stage.

In both Key Stages 1 and 2, standards have been too low for too long. On all measures, the school has been in decline for several years, with the gap between its performance and the national figures widening in the most recent years. As a result, it now finds itself in the bottom 5% of schools nationally for the amount of progress made by pupils over time. Data provided by the school shows that, whilst the recent measures taken to accelerate progress have helped a few pupils, for large numbers of others there was no progress over an academic year.

As a consequence of the actions taken by the school, in 2007, the English test results for 11-year-olds rose to 73% gaining Level 4 or above, the standard expected at Year 6. However, mathematics results dropped again to 60%, below the national minimum set by government, and science, at 69% Level 4 and above, was just above the minimum. In Key Stage 1, results in reading, writing and mathematics fell sharply. This means that too many pupils are moving into Key Stage 2 unable adequately to access the curriculum and be confident readers and writers.

The work observed in lessons and in pupils' books confirms this picture. Across Key Stage 2 pupils' writing is very poor, in content and presentation. There are substantial weaknesses in handwriting, spelling, grammar and punctuation and the work shows a lack of pride. There are exceptions to this: in some Year 6 mathematics books there is a marked improvement in the way pupils layout their work and organise their thoughts. In their English books or topic folders, the work of the same pupils is often untidy and careless. Much of this is inherited: the consequence of bad habits built up over time as a result of the absence of guidance and instruction much lower down the school about how to layout work properly. For example, across the school there is too much reliance on pupils completing worksheets. This does not allow pupils to be challenged, to organise their answers, or to write at length in more complex sentences.

There are gaps in the school's provision, and in teachers' subject knowledge, that are revealed in pupils' work. The poor systems for managing reading, across the school but especially in Key Stage 2, mean that pupils are not reading the range of books at the levels that they should be and are not being stretched intellectually. The content of their writing, an area on which the school has focused much attention, remains of a poor quality overall because staff are only now beginning to focus on how to assess pupils' writing in order to improve it. Pupils' standards in mathematics remain low because the school has not rigorously identified weaknesses across the school and year groups and instigated training for teachers on those areas. These issues are only now being tackled by the local authority consultants who are working in the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and is a positive starting point for improving their academic achievement. Parents are pleased that their children enjoy school. This is a friendly and welcoming school and parents think highly of it. A typical comment from a parent was, 'My daughter is very happy here and she refuses to stay off school even when she is not well.' Although teaching and learning are inadequate, teachers' good relationships with pupils are one of the reasons for the pupils' satisfactory behaviour and good

attitudes to school. Pupils are mostly polite, courteous and work well together. They move around the school and playground spaces safely and sensibly. Their good understanding of healthy lifestyles is seen in their enthusiasm to take part in sport and other physical activities. They know why they should drink water regularly and eat fruit and vegetables. Many pupils attend the activities available after school, such as football and basketball clubs, which help them to develop social skills and perseverance.

The work of the school council is valued and understood by pupils. However, it has not yet allowed pupils to bring about all of the changes and improvements that they would like. The weaknesses in basic skills do not prepare the pupils well enough for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching is inadequate overall to raise standards quickly enough and it results in underachievement for most pupils. The exception is pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who make satisfactory progress because of the recently introduced procedures for tracking and monitoring their progress.

Recent efforts to improve the quality of teaching are beginning to result in signs of improvement in pupils' learning, but the impact of this work is inconsistent across the school. Lessons vary considerably in quality according to the teachers' response to the new practices introduced. There are still too many lessons that do not challenge pupils' thinking and do not move pupils on quickly enough. Judgements on lesson observations by managers are confined to those required for performance management and are too generous, lacking the focus required on pupils' learning.

Teachers and support staff work together closely in their efforts to meet the varying needs of the pupils. They know that there is need to improve progress, but, even with the recent changes, there is not enough good teaching and learning in the school to enable pupils to make the progress they are capable of or to make up lost ground. Teachers' lack of skill in assessing pupils and moving them on to the next level is the major factor in the lacklustre quality of the teaching overall. The teaching does not focus sufficiently on what pupils are learning in each lesson and moving them on as rapidly as possible.

There have been, and still are, some significant gaps in school-wide systems to manage and monitor key areas of the curriculum and pupils' progress. For example, there is no whole-school system in place to manage and monitor the teaching of reading. Consequently, managers are not able to identify accurately how much progress pupils are making over time or gauge the quality of the reading provision.

There are many inconsistencies on and between class timetables, even within the same year groups, and the use of time is not as sharp as it could be in all classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is adequate overall. It enables pupils to enjoy their work and to learn how to stay safe and healthy.

The school has responded to national guidance about making learning more meaningful and exciting by reviewing and re-organising its curriculum, focusing on developing practical skills and linking work in different subjects together. The impact of this development is variable and it is too early to say whether the new curriculum will result in raised standards. Some good cross-curricular work was seen in a Year 6 lesson linking information and communication technology, literacy and history, and pupils generally showed clear signs of enjoying their lessons. Gaps in the provision for literacy and numeracy mean that standards in the core skills are not rising quickly enough.

Pupils' learning is enriched by extra-curricular activities, including a residential trip and a range of visits and visitors such as artists and a specialist drama tutor. French is now firmly established on the timetable. After-school clubs, including choir, badminton and football, are popular with pupils. Pupils are keen to participate in all sports and the school has a strong focus on healthy eating and lifestyles.

Work in personal, social, health and citizenship education contributes well to pupils' good behaviour and ensures that they work and play together happily. Pupils have sufficient opportunities to make a contribution to their community and to develop the personal skills they will need to be successful in the future.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils say they feel safe and they attend school regularly. Procedures for protecting and safeguarding pupils are in place. Some pupils report concerns about bullying but say there are many adults that they can report this to and this is then mostly dealt with.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the small number who need help with learning to speak English as an additional language benefit from extra support in lessons from assistants and learning mentors. This ensures they make adequate progress.

The academic guidance for the vast majority of pupils is inadequate because staff have been slow to start tracking their progress in detail and setting learning targets to help bring about rapid progress. Pupils do not always know what their targets are and what they need to do next in order to reach them. The quality of the marking of pupils' work is too variable to be helpful.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Leadership and management are inadequate. Despite the commitment and aspirations of the headteacher and senior staff, the actions they have taken to stem the significant decline in standards have been too late and their impact is limited. There is still a lack of a sense of urgency about what needs to be done.

The headteacher and senior staff have an over-generous view of the school's performance and the effect of their decision making. Too much reliance is placed upon external help and support despite a significant focus within the school on the development of the leadership team. Leaders at all levels are not sufficiently reflective about the work they are doing or take full professional ownership for the standards the school achieves. Core subject leaders do not have the whole-school overview and expertise to drive forward the developments needed.

The school has many initiatives under way and managers are enthusiastic about improving the curriculum for pupils. These changes have secured pupils' personal development and well-being and ensured that they enjoy school more. However, this progress is not underpinned by robust systems for ensuring pupils make good progress in the core subjects.

Governance is inadequate. Governors do not receive the information they need, to make decisions and judge the impact of the school's work, in a timely and systematic fashion. Governors only became aware of the decline in the school's performance 18 months ago. Procedures for recording governing body minutes and setting the agenda are haphazard. The headteacher's reports to governors, which are not in the format of a formal written report, are of variable quality. It is unclear from minutes of governors' meetings how much time is spent considering the issues of standards and progress. Governors have not been well served by the school improvement partner, whose challenge to the school has been inadequate and too accepting of excuses from the school for pupils' performance. The level of challenge has increased substantially since September 2007, when a senior adviser from the local authority took on the oversight of the school.

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Annex A

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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
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?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Moston Fields Primary School, Moston, M40 9GN

Thank you for making us feel so welcome and for being so helpful when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed talking with you, looking at your work and finding out about the things you like doing.

We think there are lots of positive things happening at your school but we also discovered some ways in which we think your school could be better. These are the things we liked.

- Your school is a friendly place where everyone usually gets on well together.
- You are positive about your learning - you said most lessons are fun and you enjoy the work.
- You have a good understanding about being healthy and staying safe.
- Your parents like the school.
- Your attendance is much better. Well done!

However, we think that there are several important things that the school is not doing as well as it ought to and so we have decided that the school needs 'special measures'. This means that inspectors will come to visit your school, probably each term from now on, to help Mr Bahra and the teachers make things better as soon as possible. These are the things that we think need to be improved.

- Your work in English, mathematics and science, for those of you in Key Stage 2 and reading, writing and mathematics for those of you in Key Stage 1.
- The teaching in the school.
- How teachers check how much you already know and then plan the next lessons for you to help you progress quickly.
- How the governors do their work for the school.
- How the headteacher and the other teachers do their work in the school.

I know this is a lot of work but it is very important that the school gets things right for you as soon as possible. So, when the inspectors come next time, I am sure you will be as helpful to them as you were to us.

We know that you will work hard and try to help all the teachers make things better for everybody in the school.

Good luck to you all.