

# Mather Street Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105649
<b>Local Authority</b>	Oldham
<b>Inspection number</b>	308906
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 April 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Marie Cordey

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	225
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs S Gibson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss J Adams
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 January 2004
<b>School address</b>	Mather Street Failsworth Manchester Lancashire M35 0DT
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 9113266
<b>Fax number</b>	0161 9117021

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school. The local area is relatively disadvantaged, although the school also draws pupils from a wider area that has a broader socio- economic range. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is high. There has been extended staff absence in the Foundation Stage in the last two years.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Mather Street is a good school. Central to its character is the strong focus on academic achievement coupled with good provision for pupils' personal development and well-being. A good curriculum meets the individual needs of pupils well in Years 1 to 6, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Good quality care, guidance and support ensure that pupils are well cared for and that most of them know how to improve their work. Good relationships between pupils and teachers mean that pupils can ask questions and are given opportunities to think for themselves.

Pupils achieve well from their starting points in Year 1 because of good quality teaching that enables them to make good progress in developing their knowledge and skills. Pupils reach average standards overall by the end of Year 6. The school's drive to improve provision and standards in science, since the previous inspection, has been very successful. Standards are now above average in science and mathematics because of the school's strong focus on improving pupils' application of their skills in these two subjects. Pupils apply their skills well to solve mathematical problems and to investigate scientific principles. Standards in English, particularly in writing, are not as high as those in mathematics and science. The school is aware of the need to improve standards in writing and for teachers to provide greater challenge when planning work for the more able pupils. It has put in place a programme for improvement and early indications are that it is beginning to raise standards in writing.

Pupils' positive attitudes towards school reflect their parents' pleasure in the quality of education their children receive. 'My children are lucky to be in this school. Teachers take the time to listen to children and parents.' And, 'My son can't wait to come to school and he is bubbling with enthusiasm when he comes home.' These are just two of the positive parental comments which are typical of many. The school takes good care of its pupils and is particularly effective in supporting those who are vulnerable. Outstanding links with outside agencies and the local community provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to enrich their personal and academic development. The 'Linking Project,' for instance, involves pupils working with a large group of pupils from different ethnic heritages who attend a neighbouring school. They take part in successful business challenges, theatre and photography workshops and present their own theatrical performances. In pupils' words this, 'Lets us learn about others, their faiths and beliefs and how to get along together.'

Effective leadership and management ensure that the school provides a good quality of education and care. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and two newly appointed assistant headteachers, provide a strong, clear vision for the success of the school. They enable middle managers and class teachers to be involved in school improvement and to evaluate their contribution to school life. Governors are very supportive and not afraid to ask challenging questions. The school is constantly and accurately evaluating pupils' progress in Years 1 to 6 and has good capacity to improve still further. It provides good value for money.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

The majority of the children enter the Nursery with skills that are low for their age, particularly in relation to their social, language and communication skills. In the Foundation Stage, children make expected progress due to the strong focus on language skills and through opportunities

to develop their social skills. Children settle down quickly in the Nursery class because of good preparation by the school involving children and their parents. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall with examples of good practice when children are enthusiastic and involved in their learning. The satisfactory curriculum includes a variety of practical activities, but children do not have enough opportunity to fully develop their social and physical skills. This is because the outdoor area is small and lacks sufficient play equipment. There are some relative shortcomings in this key stage which mean that its quality is satisfactory rather than good as the school judges. For example, assessment systems are not fully effective in preparing children for the next steps in their learning and the challenges of Year 1.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards in writing to match the levels reached in mathematics and science.
- Provide greater challenge for more able pupils in order to raise their standards.
- Improve assessment and provision in the Foundation Stage, especially to ensure that children are fully prepared for the next steps in learning and that they have access to better quality outdoor learning and equipment.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' achievement is good. The majority of children enter Year 1 with skills that are below those expected for their age. In Years 1 and 2, pupils achieve well and standards rise to average in mathematics and reading and below average in writing by the end of Year 2. By the time they leave Year 6, pupils' standards are above average in mathematics and science. In English they are average because of pupils' weaker writing skills. Opportunities for pupils to write in more depth and for a specific purpose are starting to result in improvements, but there is still too much of a gap between standards in reading and writing. Nevertheless, overall standards at the end of Year 6 show a steady upward trend. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress because they are quickly identified and well supported by knowledgeable and skilled staff.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils enjoy coming to school and they have positive attitudes to their learning. Good relationships with each other and school staff lead to a harmonious atmosphere. Cultural development is excellent as is the school's work to promote racial harmony and to develop pupils' tolerance and respect. Pupils' good behaviour in the playground and in lessons is based on cooperation. The very small numbers of pupils who find it more difficult to behave well are dealt with appropriately so that other pupils' learning is not disrupted. Pupils thrive on responsibility and take charge of selling fruit in the morning, putting forward ideas for making changes in the school and representing the views of others in the school council. Their requests are taken seriously and acted upon when appropriate. Pupils understand how to live healthily and are knowledgeable about how to keep safe. Attendance is now broadly average. Although the school has developed a variety of strategies to encourage pupils to come to school on time, punctuality is still a problem for a few. Good preparation for pupils' future lives includes, close liaison with local schools, opportunities to present business solutions to a local bank and effective skills in information and communication technology (ICT).

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Good teaching involves pupils and encourages them to enquire and think for themselves. There are examples of particularly good practice that really interest those pupils who thirst for more knowledge. A mathematics lesson featured pupils very effectively demonstrating the directions on a compass and planning coordinates on the interactive whiteboard. This active participation led to pupils proving the application of mathematical formulae. Lessons are well paced and planned so that pupils are interested and excited about what it is they are learning. Most teachers' high expectations mean that pupils have positive attitudes and are well motivated. Occasionally, instructions and explanations are not clear enough and pupils are not sure what it is they should be doing and learning slows. Although strategies to improve the performance of the more able pupils are beginning to take effect, there are occasions when the work set for these pupils provides insufficient challenge. Teachers treat their pupils with respect and teaching assistants provide good, well planned support for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and most pupils are aware of what they need to do in the next steps of their learning. Occasionally, marking is not always used as effectively to further challenge the more able pupils.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum in Years 1 to 6 meets pupils' needs well and is rich and varied. This contributes to the good progress pupils make and their enjoyment of school life. Basic skills are emphasised and have led to recent improvements in pupils' ICT skills in particular. Literacy skills are beginning to be incorporated into other subjects with a view to improving writing. However, this is at an early stage. In addition, the wider curriculum gives pupils the chance to demonstrate their skills in other subjects. For example, pupils organised a 'Health and Well-being Week' involving parents, the local football team, nurses, theatre groups and fitness and diet specialists. Pupils develop their thinking skills when learning about philosophical approaches to understanding themselves and the wider world. Before and after-school clubs are very popular. 'Play and Stay' groups are well attended and include both pupils who later join the school as well as a large number of other children from the local community.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

The school takes good care of its pupils. Procedures to ensure pupils' safety are rigorous. Systems to provide quick and appropriate support for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are effective and involve support assistants and teachers. There are good systems to promote pupils' personal development which ensures that they behave well, have good attitudes to their learning and are willing and capable of taking responsibility. Parents are welcomed and active in school. They contribute as helpers, participate in the 'children's centre', which involves the whole family and confidently express their views because they know that they will be listened to. The school has developed an effective system to track pupils' progress which helps teachers to become quickly aware of pupils who are at risk of underachieving. This system has worked particularly well to ensure that vulnerable pupils, and those who are on the borderline of the National Curriculum Levels 3 and 4 in Year 6, make good

progress. Although the care provided for children in the Foundation Stage is good, the assessment procedures to ensure that they are prepared for their next steps in learning are not fully effective.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good and reflect the strong focus and direction provided by the headteacher. This is particularly the case in a relentless drive to improve the school's performance and in the care and nurture provided for individual pupils. Clear vision from school's leaders is reflected in effective checks on the school's performance. These include rigorous tracking of pupils' achievement, secure judgements on the quality of teaching and learning, and providing training for staff to help achieve school improvement targets. Although leaders are taking steps to raise achievement in writing, they have yet to be fully effective. The school works especially well with outside agencies to support pupils. Relationships with partnership schools, the police, local museums, art galleries and theatres make a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. The governing body questions the school's performance rigorously and is involved in evaluating strengths as well as school improvement.

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## 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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

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

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<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>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Mather Street Primary School, Manchester, M35 0DT

Thank you for your warm welcome and for being so helpful and polite. You helped to make the inspection enjoyable and I would like to share with you what I found out about your school.

It provides you with a good education and as a result, you make good progress in your work and are helped to become sensible, confident young people. You are encouraged to eat healthily and keep fit and you enjoy the many opportunities to take part in activities both before and after school. Your work on the 'Linking Project' shows how really well you mix with people from other faiths and cultures. All the staff take good care of you. You do well in most of your subjects, but we have asked you headteacher and teachers to help you to do as well in writing as you do in mathematics and science. We have also asked your teachers to plan more difficult work for those of you who find learning easier than most. You can help by listening really carefully and doing what your teachers ask you to do to improve.

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes settle down quickly when they join the school because they are made to feel so welcome and comfortable by adults and by older pupils. They get on quite well but I have asked your headteacher to work with your teachers and support assistants to help prepare these young children better for the next steps in their learning, especially for the harder work when they join Year 1. I have also asked your headteacher and other teachers to make sure these children have access to better quality outdoor learning and provide more play equipment in this outside area.