

Navigation Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106283
Local Authority	Trafford
Inspection number	309084
Inspection dates	24–25 September 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	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	342
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Helen Yates
Headteacher	Mr Stephen Busby
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2003
School address	Hawarden Road Altrincham Cheshire WA14 1NG
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average primary school serves a mainly White British population and has small groups of pupils from a range of other minority ethnic heritages. The area has few signs of social and economic disadvantage and the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. Small numbers are at an early stage of learning to speak English or are in the care of the local authority. An average proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children's skills on entry to the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) are typical for their age. The school has achieved the following awards: Healthy School; Primary Quality Mark; Artsmark Silver; and Activemark Gold. The school has faced a period of disruption due to temporary accommodation and moving to new premises. The school offers extended services before and after the school day.

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 that gives sound value for money. Recent initiatives have promoted some improvement in standards, assessment procedures and curriculum planning and led the school to judge itself as good. These developments have not had enough time to bring about sufficient improvement to be judged good, particularly in the progress pupils make.

Pupils' good personal development is promoted by strengths in the otherwise satisfactory curriculum and the school's obviously caring ethos. Effective moral and social development leads to good behaviour and positive attitudes to school and work. Pupils' excellent knowledge and understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle are promoted well by the school's award-winning work. They play safely and say they feel secure in the new premises. Most pupils and parents are agreed that school is enjoyable and the good, regular attendance supports this view. Pupils make a positive contribution to school, for example, through the school council and the way they carry out day-to-day responsibilities. The combination of these positive qualities and satisfactory academic progress help prepare the pupils well for their future.

Satisfactory teaching, learning and academic guidance promote satisfactory achievement. Standards are broadly average. Children get a satisfactory start in the Foundation Stage and reach the nationally expected goals by the time they enter Year 1. Pupils make satisfactory progress from Years 1 to 6. In national tests, Year 2 results since 2004 are on an upward trend, but the improvements are slower in writing than other subjects, particularly for the higher attaining pupils. Early indications from the 2007 Year 6 tests show that challenging targets were met at the average Level 4, but not at the higher Level 5, particularly in writing.

Although there are strong elements to the teaching and learning, there are also areas for improvement, particularly in the way pupils are challenged. This is because assessment and tracking of pupils' academic achievements are not always used effectively to match work to their individual needs. Moreover, marking does not consistently show pupils how well they are achieving their personal targets and what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has led the school well through a period of disruption and uncertainty, whilst maintaining a sound focus on improvement. He has benefited from the willing support of the deputy headteacher, staff and governors. Strengths include the monitoring of health and safety, and financial matters. The formal evaluation of teaching, learning and pupils' progress is not rigorous enough and leads to inconsistencies in practice and the challenge offered to pupils.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Satisfactory teaching and learning promote steady progress in children's academic and personal development. Detailed records are beginning to be kept of their achievements and staff make appropriate interventions to ensure learning is taking place. Good arrangements for settling children into the Nursery ensure that they quickly grow used to the routines of the school. Staff work hard and successfully to maintain a happy and secure base and the parents are most appreciative of this. Sound leadership and management have fostered strong teamwork and the appropriate use of the new premises.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, particularly for the higher attaining pupils.
- Improve the use of marking, assessment and tracking information so that all pupils' learning is challenging.
- Make the monitoring of teaching, learning and pupils' progress more rigorous.

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

In the current Years 2 and 6, standards are average and pupils are making satisfactory progress. Pupils do best in reading and mathematics, but writing standards lag behind, particularly for the highest attaining pupils in Year 6. The tracking of pupils' achievements shows that progress is uneven over time, with a stronger performance in Years 5 and 6. For the current Year 6, slower progress in earlier years was partly the result of disruptions to staffing. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those in the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language and the ones in the care of the local authority make satisfactory progress towards their goals. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are better than at the time of the last inspection and this represents good improvement.

Results in national tests in Years 2 and 6 have fluctuated over time. In Year 2, results have been mostly around the average and there is a rising trend since 2004. Early indications are that at the end of Year 6, science standards in 2007 have risen, particularly for the highest attaining pupils. This has been brought about by the school rigorously analysing test papers and taking action to tackle the identified areas for improvement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Most pupils have a positive self-image because they approach the regular opportunities for drama, sports and musical occasions confidently. Behaviour is good but, occasionally, pupils become over excited and their behaviour slips. Pupils look forward to the many rewards for good behaviour and effort, like Golden Time, offered by teachers. They have a growing awareness of their own and other cultures. Pupils learn from each other and from religious education lessons and assemblies about the major world religions. Through this good provision they become more tolerant of different viewpoints. Pupils really like coming to their new school building. They enjoy lessons and playing with their friends. Most pupils report that they feel safe in school and know an adult they can speak to if they are unwell or unhappy. They speak highly of the anti-bullying week activities, which improved their understanding of what bullying is and how to combat it. The school council is well organised and influential. It organises events to raise money for playground equipment and other extras, for example, through discos and cake sales. Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities in school, for instance, the 'Navigators' make sure that hallways and stairs are used properly.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching which lead to pupils' learning being satisfactory rather than good as judged by the school. In most lessons, pupils are well managed so that learning can take place but, in others, they become over excited and call out answers. Teachers' questioning is frequently effective in bringing out what pupils know. For example, in a Year 3/4 ICT lesson, the teacher probed their understanding of symmetry and pupils showed they had a good understanding of the topic. Occasionally, questioning is solely factual, which does not encourage pupils' thinking. Teachers use a variety of methods to help pupils learn. For example, in a Year 1 handwriting lesson, pupils concentrated well as they used 'magic fingers' to draw a letter in the air, they said 'down, up, across and off' and saw the letter drawn on the interactive whiteboard. Teachers also encourage pupils to explain their thinking when they use their whiteboard which consolidates pupils' understanding and builds their confidence. The school has effective procedures to identify pupils who need further challenge or additional support. Yet, in some lessons, tasks do not meet the needs of these pupils sufficiently well because teachers do not make good enough use of the available information.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school has recently altered its curriculum to take a more thematic approach to learning. In its first term this promoted pupils' enjoyment of learning and gave them greater opportunities to use their literacy, numeracy and computer skills. However, it is too early to evaluate its impact on standards because of the remaining variability in what is expected of pupils. Most pupils are very confident in using their ICT skills because both provision and teachers' expertise have been improved since the last inspection. Music, sports and drama are given a high priority; for example, all Year 5 pupils learned to play a brass instrument and pupils talk eagerly about recent drama productions. The school offers two residential visits which pupils look forward to because, 'they're really exciting and help us work together'.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school's support for pupils and parents extends beyond the school day to include both breakfast and after-school clubs. Comments from satisfied parents, such as, 'my child enjoys coming to school every day', are typical. Safeguarding procedures meet government requirements. Child protection procedures and assessments of risks to health and safety are in place. As a result, pupils have confidence in staff and know that help is always available if needed. Effective monitoring procedures promote good attendance, punctuality and behaviour. Very good links with a wide range of agencies help to provide specialist support when needed and ensure that pupils with extra learning needs are included in all aspects of school life. The school is in the process of improving systems for tracking pupils' academic progress. There are some inconsistencies in the use of marking to tell pupils how they can do better. Good links with secondary schools promote smooth preparation for future learning and the wider world.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has provided good leadership through a significant period of disruption to the school and has started the much needed improvement in both the use and development of academic assessment and the quality of the school's curriculum. As a result, the school has a better view than in the past of inconsistencies in pupils' progress and the provision made. Initiatives have been introduced to overcome these and there is an upward trend in results, particularly in science. Given this evidence of a steadily improving picture, the capacity for further improvement is satisfactory. Nevertheless, the monitoring of teaching and pupils' academic work is too concerned with the performance of the teacher, rather than pupils' learning. Although priorities in the school improvement plan are accurately identified, the measures of academic success are not focused enough on the challenging targets for all year groups. Consequently, it is more difficult for leaders and managers to monitor rates of pupils' progress. Although the sound governing body receives appropriate information from a range of providers, it does not have a definitive procedure of its own to better evaluate the work of the school. Financial management is prudent and effective and has led to the school successfully turning a significant deficit into a healthy surplus.

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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?	3
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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?	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?	2

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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**

The inspection team thoroughly enjoyed being in your school recently. We are most grateful for your warm welcome, courtesy and the help you provided. These are some of the main findings about your satisfactory school.

- The big improvement in the confident ways that you use your ICT skills.
- The contribution of the school council to day-to-day and longer term matters, such as advising on premises and healthy eating.
- The happy and purposeful way that you are enjoying the new premises and the way you show responsibility by doing important jobs and in helping those new to the school to settle.
- Your excellent knowledge and understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle.
- Your good behaviour and attitudes to work and the regularity of your attendance which show how much you like school.
- The good contribution that you make to a safe and caring ethos in the school.
- Your appreciation of the interesting and wide range of activities that enrich your curriculum, particularly the residential visits.
- The good leadership of the headteacher through a difficult period of disruption for the school.

To help your school to improve, we have asked your teachers to ensure that you do even better in writing, particularly the higher attainers. Also, we have suggested that the information your teachers gather about your achievements is used better to make your learning more challenging. Marking needs to make even clearer how much you already know and what you need to do to improve further. Pupils can be a great help by always doing their best work and by following the advice and guidance from the teachers. Finally, we have requested that the school's leaders make even more rigorous checks on how well you are doing.

Good luck for the future.