

Styal Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111009
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	310479
Inspection dates	1–2 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Graham Martin

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr R Dixon
Headteacher	Mrs Sally Heap-Saville
Date of previous school inspection	24 November 2003
School address	Altrincham Road Styal Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 4JE
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school is situated in a uniquely historic location on a National Trust estate. Three quarters of the pupils attend from outside the village of Styal; a significant proportion of these pupils come from an area of Manchester that experiences significant social and economic disadvantage. The school is popular and there is a waiting list for admission to most year groups. A larger than average number of pupils join or leave the school during each school year; in some years as many as three quarters of the pupils in Year 6 did not start at the school in Reception. The proportion of pupils entitled to receive free school meals is lower than average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities fluctuates widely from year to year but, over time, is broadly average. The school holds Investor in People status and the Artsmark (Gold) award. It has partnerships through several Wilmslow cluster groups, including an Education Improvement Partnership, an Inclusion Network and the Wilmslow High School Sports Partnership.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has many outstanding features. Its caring family atmosphere is valued highly by parents and pupils and it has very beneficial community partnerships. Together, these make an exceptionally good contribution to pupils' personal and social development and well-being. Pupils are well prepared for high school, saying they have no worries about moving from a small school to a much larger one because they get a good all-round education at Styal.

Pupils make good progress throughout the school. The Year 6 test results in 2007 were significantly lower than average in English and mathematics, but not typical of the school's performance in previous years. The small and changing nature of each year group of pupils leads to varying standards and makes year on year comparisons difficult. The school's tracking data and pupils' work shows that standards in the current Year 6 are average, representing good achievement for this group of pupils. Although pupils make good progress and achieve well overall, pupils' achievement in writing and in their ability to solve mathematical problems lags behind that in other areas. The good learning is due to good teaching, pupils' very positive attitudes and their enthusiasm in response to learning opportunities that are exceptionally rich, diverse and stimulating. However, in some lessons the writing activities are not always closely matched to pupils' different abilities to help them achieve as well as they can.

Pupils are exceptionally well cared for; they say that they feel safe and free from bullying or any intimidation. Their outstanding behaviour and relationships show how they all get along exceptionally well, helping each other to enjoy life at their school. Pupils' understanding of the needs of pupils who arrive at Styal from other schools is excellent. 'We always make new people feel very welcome' was a typical comment. Attendance is good. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet current guidelines. Vulnerable pupils are kept under close scrutiny to ensure that their well-being is not compromised, an example of the outstanding care that parents give as one of the reasons why they choose Styal school for their children.

Leadership and management are good. An outstanding feature is the headteacher's leadership, which encourages the whole school community to be involved in evaluating the school's work. These evaluations are used well to inform future improvement. The school sustains its historic tradition well, making good use of the unique local resources and maintaining good communication with well known former pupils who have a wealth of knowledge and range of expertise, such as international recognition for their work in human rights. The school takes good advantage of its location to provide pupils with extra dimensions to their learning, such as creating outdoor sculptures that blend into its parkland landscape. This gives the school a unique outlook - while keeping an eye on the best traditions of the past it works simultaneously towards meeting the current and future needs of its pupils, such as through the improvement in pupils' use of information and communication technology. This outlook, along with the committed work of school leaders and governors, gives the school its good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good. Children's abilities vary widely on entry to Reception and the small size and changing make up of each year group make direct year on year comparisons difficult. For example, in the past children's skills have been typically as expected for their age but those of the current group of children are below expectations. From

their starting point, children achieve well. Parents confirm that their children settle very well into school. They like the careful planning for their children's introduction and the openness and approachability of the staff. A very positive and mutually beneficial partnership between parents and staff helps children to make good progress in their social development and in developing their important skills in language and number. Checks on children's learning are meticulous, which enables teachers to ensure that activities are matched to children's individual learning needs. The Foundation Stage is led and managed well. Staff work well with groups and individuals to assess their progress carefully and direct them to activities that move their learning on.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teachers plan writing activities that meet pupils' different abilities to raise standards and achievement in English.
- Improve pupils' skills in problem solving in mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. There are significant fluctuations in test results due to the small size of each year group. However, the school meets its targets and pupils at the end of Year 6 usually reach broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science. The lower than average results in 2007 were largely due to a higher than average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in the year group, some of whom had transferred late into the school from other schools. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Pupils' work shows that current standards in reading, calculation and science are a little above average. Progress in writing is satisfactory overall. Often those at the school from Reception to Year 6 tend to do better in writing than those joining at a later stage. Across the school pupils make good progress in their understanding of number and they have good calculation and mental arithmetic skills. However, the skills of using number to solve problems are less well developed and could be better.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' have exceptionally good relationships with each other and the adults who help them. Their understanding of the interests and needs of others is outstanding. Pupils are extremely knowledgeable about how to live healthy lifestyles, helped by the encouragement of the school cook who prepares high quality nutritious meals for them. Pupils also have an exceptionally good ability to evaluate risks to their personal safety. They very much enjoy their time at school. Attendance is good. Pupils enjoy receiving the awards provided through a worthwhile 'improving attendance' partnership with the nearby international airport. They respond exceptionally well to the many opportunities to take responsibility. They show initiative and commitment to the well-being of other pupils and to their school, such as through the school council, being year group buddies and leading the organisation of special events, including the popular 'wake up and shake up' drill at the start of each school day. Pupils enjoy the challenge of lessons. They acquire exceptional personal and social skills along with good basic skills to help secure their future well being. Through an outstanding range of learning experiences they are well prepared for secondary school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The most effective lessons ensure that pupils know the focal point of their learning, characterised by good feedback to pupils about the quality of their work and whether they have met the learning objectives and the teacher's high expectations. Exceptionally good support from teaching assistants enables pupils with barriers to learning to make good progress. Teachers use questioning well to ensure that pupils think hard, and at the end of the lesson there are enjoyable ways for pupils to show the teacher how well they have understood their work. In one outstanding lesson pupils investigated the use of descriptive vocabulary in the poem 'The Highwayman' by Alfred Noyes and came to an understanding of how the vocabulary is used to romanticise the narrative. In all lessons observed the good behaviour of pupils enabled excellent relationships with their teachers and each other and ensured that learning was effective. Progress is assessed regularly and pupils who are experiencing difficulties receive support that helps them to achieve their learning targets. Although teachers usually plan activities tailored to pupils' needs and abilities this is not always the case in writing; consequently, progress slows on such occasions.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school does exceptionally well for its size to provide outstanding opportunities for learning. The curriculum goes well beyond providing the essential basic skills to ensure that its richness captures pupils' interests. This is readily seen in pupils' enjoyment of learning. The enthusiasm for taking part in the wider opportunities provided, such as playing a musical instrument, learning Spanish and developing good information and communication technology skills, is clearly evident.

The skills and interests of volunteers, including parents and carers, are put to very good use to add value to the learning opportunities provided. Governors speak highly of the involvement of volunteers and non-teaching staff in providing extra activities that add much worth to pupils' learning on and off the school site, including residential visits. The quality of creative work reflects the school's strong commitment to the curriculum for the arts. Good improvement to the provision for sports and games has strengthened opportunities for pupils to develop healthy lifestyles. The school's focus on the environment and making use of its unique location on a National Trust estate ensures that pupils take seriously their responsibilities to be good citizens. All this adds great worth to pupils' enjoyment of learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Parents agree overwhelmingly that their children's social, emotional and academic needs are exceptionally well catered for. A very strong commitment to each pupil's well-being ensures the best possible care for every child. Parents are welcomed as partners so that very good relationships between home and school aid learning. Child protection and safeguarding procedures meet requirements and governors take their health and safety duties very seriously. The school building is a safe and well maintained environment in which to learn. The school provides a variety of quality activities which support pupils' social and emotional needs, such

as learning enrichment days. These initiatives respond to the changing character of the school's intake, helping to break down barriers to learning, boosting pupils' self-esteem and raising attainment. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very good. Pupils know their targets and understand why they are important. Where there has been regular and consistent target-setting for pupils who have been in the school from Reception, good consistent progress follows this highly focused academic guidance. A recent revision of the marking policy has improved teachers' focus on ensuring that pupils have a good understanding of their learning targets. It is too soon to see the full impact of this work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

There are some outstanding features in leadership and management. Comprehensive procedures for involving parents, pupils, staff and governors in the evaluation of the school are in place. The high quality of the school's inclusive practice ensures that all pupils are made welcome and thrive during their time at the school. The development of exciting and interesting learning opportunities by the leadership team is a key feature in ensuring pupils' good all-round quality of education. Checks on the school's work are rigorous. They provide an effective benchmark for deciding if the school is meeting its mission and to identify any weaknesses. The school clearly plans its improvement priorities in response to this evaluation, taking account of all views while also identifying key learning priorities from a careful analysis of pupils' progress. Actions taken to improve standards in writing and problem solving have yet to be evaluated to judge their effectiveness.

Outstanding partnerships with the community, including its National Trust landlords and other schools, help Styal school to achieve its mission to ensure that all pupils strive for excellence. Governors make a good contribution to the well-being of the school. Their direct involvement in the complexities of managing the building and its development in partnership with the National Trust takes some of the management pressures away from school staff so that they can focus on the education of pupils.

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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?	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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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**

Thank you for welcoming me to your school. Styal school feels like a big happy family. It was a real pleasure to meet so many smiling, polite and friendly children and your welcome helped me to feel part of that family. I enjoyed finding out from you how much you enjoy learning and how proud you are of your school. I was pleased that you told me that you are not worried about going to high school because you get a good education at Styal and I agree with you. My inspection of the school found that you have a good school with lots of features that are even better than good.

- I was impressed with how well you behave and how welcoming you are to new people in your school.
- You explained to me very clearly how well you know that living a healthy life and keeping safe are important.
- You have a very good understanding of the history of your school and its traditions; the way you help to keep up those traditions makes a very good contribution to your community. At the same time, you know how useful learning in new areas, such as using computers, can be.
- You are looked after very well and you have an excellent range of opportunities for learning in different subjects and in after-school clubs. I also liked the beautiful art work you produce.

To help your school to get even better, I have asked your headteacher and staff to make some careful checks on two things.

- Make sure you are all given work that helps you to make the progress you should in writing so that more of you reach higher standards in English.
- Check that you use your good number skills to solve mathematical problems to help raise standards in mathematics.

You go to a good school and I know from talking with many of you that you enjoy helping your school to be even better. I am sure that, along with your teachers, you will continue working towards making your school become an outstanding place to be. I send you my best wishes for the future.