

Meadowbank Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135008
Local Authority	Stockport
Inspection number	319246
Inspection dates	27–28 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Jon Lovgreen

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	365
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Helen Thompson
Headteacher	Mrs Janine Appleton
Date of previous school inspection	14 February 2007
School address	Councillor Lane Cheadle Cheshire SK8 2LE
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Introduction

The school was inspected by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average primary school was formed in September 2005, by an amalgamation of two other schools. There are more boys than girls on roll. The school makes specialist provision for over 20 pupils with a wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities so the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is much higher than usually found. The vast majority of pupils are White British. Free school meal uptake matches the national average. The school has a Healthy School Award, Extended School status and has an Activemark for its work in sport.

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 and improving school, which has responded well to the last inspection report. The issues for improvement raised twelve months ago have been tackled with energy, determination and success. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The headteacher has provided strong and clear leadership to bring the school through a period of change and staffing turbulence. A focus on gaining higher results and tackling underachievement has been successful. Teaching that is not good enough has rightly been challenged and more interesting teaching encouraged. Senior leaders are aware that this phase of the school's journey has been successfully completed and is now focused on quickening pupil progress. Systems for checking the school at work and planning for improvement are effective. They are, however, at present too detailed to help target and focus school improvement. The school recognises that teaching and learning improve best where staff are given clear priorities to focus on in a supportive encouraging environment. Parents are confident that the school is improving and many appreciate initiatives like coffee mornings and parents' events to get them involved. However, some rightly still feel that the school adopts a rather remote stance on some issues.

Standards have risen in both key stages, though the rate at which boys are making progress in Key Stage 2 has not kept pace with that of girls. The improvement has come about because both teachers and pupils have a clearer idea about what standards can be reached. Teachers are using this knowledge to plan more interesting and appropriate lessons. Pupils have a better idea of how to make progress in their work because teachers give specific comment on what has been done well and what could be improved. Pupils are enjoying school more because of this feedback and they are responding well to the wider range of lesson activities on offer and the increased opportunities to talk work through. However, when expected to get on with written work on their own, too few make a full effort to concentrate on the task in hand and get on quickly. This is especially the case with older boys because teachers do not give clear enough guidance about how to work with focus and urgency. Behaviour outside of lessons has improved and is now satisfactory.

The curriculum has been improved, notably so in science, but a stress on making sure that subjects are covered has resulted in a rather unimaginative approach to planning. Topics which link curriculum areas are too rare so that pupils get too few opportunities to transfer what has been learned into a new setting. The result is some learning which is too predictable and insufficiently stimulating. A significant improvement has been to fully include pupils from the specialist provision in Key Stage 2 lessons. This has been a benefit to the social development of all pupils. It has been a big factor in enabling pupils from the specialist provision to make the same progress as their classmates, thanks to the way teachers plan for them and the good quality of support they usually get from key workers and other support staff. Systems for looking after pupils are secure and pupils feel cared for as a result. The stress on academic success, however, has sometimes given the incorrect impression to families that the school values test results more than pupils' achievement and personal development. The school is in good spirit and the new management team is keen to get things moving. The continuing guidance of the local authority and the increasingly effective support of the governing body are other factors that bolster the school's capacity to improve further. Value for money is now satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children's skills on entry to the Nursery vary widely but, overall, they are below those expected for their age. Very good induction procedures ensure that children settle quickly into school routines. They make good progress in both Nursery and Reception classes in all areas of learning because of good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching. Provision for learning outdoors is good, though it is used better in the Nursery than in Reception. Children learn to get on with each other really well because of the good quality of care they get in the bright and attractive learning environment. They grow in confidence and begin to show independence because success is praised and effort rewarded. They are really keen to work, responding well to the wide range of practical activities that engage their interest. Behaviour is good. Planning and assessment systems ensure very effective links between Nursery and Reception: they are thorough so that tasks are well matched to what individual children need. Leadership and management are very effective. Teachers and support assistants work well together.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate the rate of boys' progress in Years 3 to 6.
- Improve the curriculum so that pupils get more stimulating chances to explore and apply their knowledge and understanding.
- Make sure that teachers build on and use pupils' positive attitudes by getting them to think more deeply and be more enthusiastic about putting pen to paper.
- Simplify improvement planning and how school progress is checked so that teachers and managers are clearer about exact priorities and how they will be met.

A small proportion of 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

The standards pupils reach by the time they leave school have improved since the last inspection. They now match the national average and achievement is satisfactory. By the end of Key Stage 1 standards are average for both boys and girls. In 2007 both did better in reading and writing than in mathematics, where results were weaker at the higher levels. The progress pupils make in Key Stage 2, an area of concern at the time of the last inspection, has improved. Results from the 2007 national tests show all groups of pupils to have made satisfactory progress, although girls did better than boys. Standards in English and science improved to match those in mathematics, though the proportion of pupils gaining Level 5 in science was lower than expected. This greater consistency reflects the concerted effort the school has made to tackle underachievement. Pupils made better progress than previously from their standards in Year 2 because teachers were more alert to the range of ability within classes. Whilst pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities made satisfactory progress, those with statements of special educational need did less well because they had too often been withdrawn from lessons for support. The school's detailed tracking data shows that the progress of pupils currently in the school is satisfactory and accelerating, though the latter is more the case with girls. Pupils from the specialist provision, now fully welcomed and well supported in lessons, are also making satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. They enjoy being at school and appreciate how it has improved over recent months. They comment that science lessons are now, 'so interesting' and that there are, 'fewer silly people' who interrupt activities. Pupils' satisfactory behaviour and awareness of how to stay safe mean that break-times and lessons run smoothly. Play-time buddies look out for those who are feeling lonely or upset and also guide the younger children in lunch-time games. Pupils happily take on responsibilities, such as leading the energetic 'Wake up, shake up!' early morning exercise sessions. School council members operate the healthy snack shop, but do not yet use their numeracy skills to tally up the takings or consider whether or not it is running at a profit or loss. Pupils are welcoming and polite to visitors and generally form good relationships with each other. They accept others' differences, for example, willingly including pupils with specialist learning needs in all activities. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong and are beginning to develop an appreciation of other cultures and ways of living. Some speak vividly about tasting Fairtrade chocolate from Ghana and how their choices can impact on others. Attendance is average. Satisfactory development of basic skills prepares pupils suitably for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils and parents both comment positively about the way that lessons have become much more enjoyable over the past year. Teachers now use a good range of methods and activities to engage pupils' interest and cater for different ways of learning. Year 1 pupils have plenty of opportunity to experiment both inside the building and out, for instance, with balls, cars, quoits and lightweight fabric when investigating 'pushing and pulling'. Year 5 pupils made good use of music and visual stimuli to help them create settings for a play. Teaching assistants provide useful support throughout the school. Teachers give clear explanations, use interactive whiteboards effectively and generally manage behaviour well, although some classrooms are quite noisy. They use good questioning to establish pupils' knowledge of facts but most do not probe sufficiently to extend pupils' thinking skills. Group work is well organised but teachers do not always make sure that all pupils, particularly boys, are actually working as hard as they could or getting their ideas down on paper. However, they do provide helpful comments for pupils about how to improve their work and use assessment information satisfactorily to adapt their plans to cater for pupils' different abilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has been improved since the last inspection and issues have been successfully addressed. Teachers have been successful in preparing a science course that is more interesting because of more practical work and investigations. Pupils registered with the specialist provision follow the full curriculum alongside other pupils in all years, but still benefit from appropriate additional support. The school has used 'Golden Time' to introduce pupils to language taster sessions in French, Spanish and Chinese. A satisfactory range of visits, for example, to an owl sanctuary for younger pupils or to Chester to study the Romans for pupils in Key Stage 2,

enriches pupils' understanding and interest. A wider range of sporting activities is helping pupils to see that health and fun go together. However, whilst curriculum planning has encouraged a balance of experiences, it has not done enough to stimulate curiosity or excite pupils. They show limited understanding of links between subjects and rarely get the opportunity to apply skills learned in one area to a new situation.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils feel safe in school and say that they have someone to turn to if they have worries. However, the older pupils also say that, although staff listen to them, they, 'often have something more important to do first', before trying to resolve difficulties. A clear system of choices and consequences, combined with useful specific support for individuals, has proved effective. It has helped the small number who find self-discipline difficult to improve their behaviour. Systems are in place to promote child protection, health and safety. Good arrangements help to ease pupils' transition into school and on to secondary school. Staff and outside specialists work together closely to diagnose the individual needs of those that have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to develop strategies to support them and to monitor their progress. Some provision to promote their literacy and numeracy skills is of good quality but this is not yet the case throughout the school. One area in which the school has moved forward really well is in the guidance for pupils about how to improve their work. From the youngest upwards they have opportunities to evaluate their own and others' work and are very aware of their individual targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school has successfully come through a period of considerable challenge and change. The headteacher has worked tirelessly to make sure that direction is clear, expectations understood and progress carefully checked. This has ensured good progress in tackling the issues from the last inspection. New management teams are willing and able to accept their part in helping the school to improve further. However, some are temporary and others inexperienced so that their impact thus far has been limited. Systems to check how well the school is doing are regular and thorough but managers are not yet adept enough at drawing precise conclusions about where future efforts are best targeted. Development plans are very detailed but lack sharp, clearly expressed priorities. As a result teachers are not always clear enough about exactly where improvement is needed, nor sufficiently confident about how this can best be achieved. However, there is a sense of teamwork and shared responsibility, which is becoming apparent to all who work in the school. Teachers are more confident and consistent in their everyday work in the classroom as a result. The local authority has given sensitive and wise support and guidance, which has been appreciated and well used by school managers. The governing body has a good understanding of the school's work and has the insight to ask the sort of questions which will help it move forward further. The monthly meetings of a progress monitoring group have helped to keep up the pace of improvement.

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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?	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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
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?	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	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?	3
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	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**

As you know we recently visited your school to see how well you are doing and if the school has got better since the last inspection a year ago. This letter is to tell you what we found.

Thank you for being so polite, helpful and ready to talk to us about school. You obviously enjoy school and appreciate that teachers really are trying to make lessons more interesting. You have a much better idea of how good your work is and how to improve it. The youngest children get a lot of interesting things to do. It is very clear that you look after each other and that behaviour outside of lessons has improved. The way you are involved in decisions about the tuck shop and your keenness to take part in the extra sports activities show that you know how important it is to stay fit and healthy. There have been a lot of changes to school and the headteacher has worked really hard to make it a better place. It is, because teachers are now working better together and are happier about how things are going.

In order to make your school even better we have asked teachers and governors to:

- make sure that boys make quicker progress in Years 3 to 6
- plan more topics that will really interest you and give you skills that you can use widely
- use your enjoyment in lessons to help you understand ideas better, but also teach you the importance of quick and accurate written work
- improve ways of planning how the school can improve so that they are clearer.

You can help by really concentrating hard in lessons, especially when you are working in pairs or groups without the teacher's help.