

Alma Park Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105389
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	324216
Inspection date	26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Bernard Jones

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	467
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Jennie Henry
Headteacher	Mrs P Treanor
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Errwood Road Levenshulme Manchester Lancashire M19 2PF
Telephone number	0161 224 8789
Fax number	0161 225 2776

Age group	3–11
Inspection date	26 February 2009
Inspection number	324216

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards at each key stage, the teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) and the impact of middle managers and governors in supporting school improvement. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage was also inspected. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, the scrutiny of pupils' work, assessment data and school documentation. In addition, interviews were held with pupils, parents, members of the governing body, members of staff and the headteacher. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but no evidence was found to suggest that the school's self-evaluation was not accurate and these judgements have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average school which has provision for Early Years Foundation Stage in the Nursery and two Reception classes. Most pupils are from minority ethnic groups. A significant number are new to the country. Many are at an early stage in English language acquisition. There is also a small number of refugees and looked-after children. A much higher than normal proportion of pupils join and leave the school during the school year. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. The school has attained the National Healthy Schools Gold Award, the Activemark, the Inclusion Standard Gold Award and the silver Eco-Schools award.

Extended provision is available for pupils after school. That provision was inspected separately, at the same time as the school inspection, and receives a separately written report.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This outstanding school gives excellent value for money. Parents are very pleased with the school. A typical comment was, 'This is an excellent school with first class teaching; it is highly regarded in the local community and my child has shown fantastic improvement both educationally and socially.' Parents appreciate the way that pupils are encouraged to realise their potential and are helped to mature so that they are very well prepared for their secondary education.

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Current standards in Key Stage 1 have built from levels well below expectations for their age on entry to the Nursery to near average at the end of Year 2. However, the writing skills of boys lag behind, particularly in spelling and sentence construction. Pupils who took their Year 6 National Curriculum tests in 2008 made excellent progress. The standards of pupils currently in Year 6 are broadly average. This reflects outstanding progress in relation to their starting points on entry to the Nursery. The many children who learn English as an additional language make excellent progress because they are supported very effectively by their teachers and skilled classroom assistants. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit similarly and also receive help from the school's very effective links with outside agencies. This support ensures their excellent achievement. Teachers are particularly skilled in helping pupils new to the school. A large proportion join the school later than usual. The support they receive is of high quality and ensures their rapid integration and accelerated progress.

Pupils' personal development is excellent. Attendance is good and pupils become mature, sensible and thoughtful learners who are equipped well to make decisions for themselves. Pupils gain an outstanding knowledge of how to look after themselves and live healthily and safely. They know right from wrong and take very seriously the responsibilities they are given. Pupils develop a range of basic skills that provide a secure basis for their future economic well-being. They have very positive attitudes, gained from their response to the school's emphasis on the need for every child to be happy and to succeed. They revel in their achievement in lessons and are keen to take part in the many activities the school offers. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a real strength because of the school's focus on providing a well-rounded education for its pupils. Pupils gain a deep insight into different faiths and cultures and their roles as global citizens. As a result, community cohesion is outstanding, which is reflected in pupils' excellent understanding of world issues and the harmonious relationships between the many different groups of pupils. Their behaviour is excellent and pupils make significant contributions in school and to the local community.

The quality of teaching and learning is first-rate. Excellent relationships between teachers and pupils help to create a very positive working atmosphere where everyone gets along well together and there is usually a buzz of excitement. Strong relationships between pupils mean they collaborate well in their learning. Teachers use homework very effectively and they mark work conscientiously. They encourage pupils by acknowledging their good efforts and help them to progress further. ICT is taught very well so that pupils understand and use computers very effectively. A feature of the outstanding teaching is the conscientious approach to planning lessons to meet all individual needs. The excellent use of assessment ensures accurate charting of pupils' progress. Any pupil not making the progress they should is quickly identified and helped so that all groups reach the challenging targets that are set.

Pupils receive outstanding pastoral care and guidance. Arrangements to safeguard pupils meet requirements and pupils say that they feel safe and very well cared for. All groups receive high quality academic guidance that provides an exceedingly solid platform for the outstanding progress they make. Another reason for pupils' enjoyment is the rich curriculum, which makes a clear impact on pupils' commitment to their learning and the progress they make. It provides a broad range of experiences supported by an effective programme of educational visits and visitors to the school. Pupils' experiences are further enhanced by extra activities, for example in sport, art and music, and by the residential experience made available to older pupils. External awards gained by the school reflect the richness of the curriculum. All pupils in the school learn sign language, which brings many benefits including giving children an understanding of the nature of hearing impairment as well as enabling them to communicate with their hearing impaired friends. Sign language also enriches and reinforces learning in a range of subjects such as spelling, singing and French.

The excellent quality of leadership and management at all levels stems from the outstanding lead and clear educational direction and impetus set by the headteacher. Very good links are forged with parents, who appreciate the school's success in firmly establishing the school at the heart of the community. Self-evaluation is accurate; staff know what they need to do to improve the school further and senior and middle managers have the skills to do so. The monitoring of standards and the quality of teaching and learning is systematic and rigorous. Whole-school planning is undertaken conscientiously and is detailed and appropriate to the school's stage of development. Governors effectively challenge as well as support the senior leadership. The school's success in maintaining its outstanding achievement over recent years and its very positive response to the last inspection report demonstrate excellent capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding because of excellent leadership and teaching. Most children enter the Nursery with low knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to national expectations. They settle in very well because of the great efforts undertaken with parents to ensure an untroubled transition into school. The contribution of key workers, the excellent curriculum and stimulating environment all support the children's learning and development. Consequently, they make excellent progress and most attain the early learning goals for their ages by the end of the Reception Year. This represents recent improvement. Teachers' very effective use of assessment and planning matches the curriculum to children's interests and needs and makes great use of the outside. There is an excellent balance of activities led by teachers or chosen by children. For example, children chose to use the willow tunnel and giant's chair for observational work because it really excited their imagination while other children were directed to recording mathematical work which was particularly impressive because children could see clearly the relevance of the tasks. The first-rate teaching of letters and sounds impacts significantly on raising children's skills in language and literacy. Personal development is excellent and children play well together, are sociable with each other and readily adapt to routines that help them to learn. The many children who start in the Nursery with little or no English make great strides because of experienced teaching and the additional support they receive from skilled practitioners.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve boys' writing skills in Key Stage 1, particularly spelling and sentence construction.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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 all for the welcome you extended to me and to my colleague when we inspected your school. Please thank your parents and carers for all their letters and for taking the time to talk to us.

Yours is an outstanding school. We enjoyed watching you during your lessons, talking to you and looking at your work. We found that you help to make your school very attractive and well cared for. The displays of your work in your classrooms and corridors are of a high quality and helpful to your learning. They also make your classrooms a pleasure to be in. You are outstanding in the way you behave in classes and around the school and in the way you take responsibility. This can be seen in your contribution to the work of the school council and the way your 'ABC' monitors help younger pupils. You receive excellent teaching and lots of skilled support from other adults in the school. You say you like your teachers and the way they take excellent care of you and teach you to be safe and healthy. Your school helps you to develop into very mature young people, who get on well with each other and consider other people. You make excellent progress and tell us that you really enjoy coming to school and doing your work.

It is usual after an inspection to ask schools to improve some things. To make things even better, I have asked your school to help improve the writing skills of boys in Years 1 and 2, particularly their spelling and sentence construction. You can help by continuing to work hard.