

Varna Street Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105459
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	324224
Inspection dates	20–21 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Kevin Johnson

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)	211
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	Mr J Dwan
Headteacher	Mr Bernard Madden
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	Barrass Street Openshaw Greater Manchester M11 1WP
Telephone number	0161 2233569
Fax number	0161 2238322

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	20–21 May 2009
Inspection number	324224

© 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.

Description of the school

This average sized school is located in an area where there is significant social disadvantage. A significant number of pupils leave or are enrolled at the school at other than the usual times. Almost half the pupils are known to be eligible for a free school meal. The proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is very high. An above average proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage comprises Nursery and Reception classes. A breakfast club is provided by the school. The school also provides learning opportunities for adults in the community. National Healthy School's status has been achieved, as well as Activemark and, recently, the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Exceptional leadership has brought about outstanding quality of teaching and of care and support. Pupils' personal development thrives and pupils make excellent academic progress.

Varna Street is, and always will be, our school' is how pupils express pride in their achievements and their enjoyment of learning. Pupils share a tremendous sense of belonging. Their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is amply demonstrated in the respect pupils have for one another, and in the way in which they learn from each other about their many different faiths and cultures. Behaviour is excellent and attendance and punctuality are good. Pupils are fully aware of what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle and how this can be achieved. They feel safe and very well protected in school because of the excellent relationships that exist. Pupils' contribution to their community is excellent. They gladly accept responsibility, for example, as recycling officers, librarians or as playground buddies. During the inspection, some arrived in school early to prepare a report on the previous night's disco. Impressive work by the school council, which included a 'design event' for pupils and a presentation to the members of the City Council, has resulted in pupils' ideas being used by architects in plans for their new school. Pupils make and sell Christmas cards for school funds and take part in a project whereby pupils meet and interview people from different professions. These activities help them to develop some of the important life skills needed to succeed as future members of a community.

Pupils currently reach average standards overall by the end of Year 6. From their very low starting points on entering the Early Years Foundation Stage, that represents outstanding achievement. Many pupils, often with little or no English, join or leave the school at different times. Some do not complete a key stage, but because of outstanding provision for them and the quality of teaching they receive, they too make excellent progress during their time in the school. Despite pupils' excellent achievement there is no complacency and the school recognises that standards overall in English and mathematics could be improved, particularly in the area of mental calculation and in writing. The quality of teaching and learning is exceptional. Procedures for assessing and planning for individual pupils are highly effective. Classroom practice is continually reviewed and the best is shared throughout the school to ensure that all pupils make the best possible progress. The curriculum is exciting. It is rich in art, music and sport and provides outstanding opportunities for pupils to develop their personal skills.

Leadership and management of the school are outstanding. Leaders have fully resolved issues identified in the last report. Very effective evaluation and planning have led to significant improvement. An outstanding development is the organisation, support and teaching for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, for those from minority ethnic groups who learn to speak English as an additional language and who enter the school mid-term. Standards show a continued rising trend and the quality of teaching has been raised. Systems for checking the school's academic performance are extremely robust. All staff share accountability for pupils' progress. Aspirational targets are set to challenge pupils to the full. The school is the hub of the community. It reaches out, beyond expected boundaries, to provide learning opportunities, for example, for the local unemployed and for groups newly arrived in the area. Equality of opportunity underpins the school's ethos and directs outstanding promotion of community cohesion. Governors' contribution to the direction and planning for improvement is excellent. They provide very strong challenge and support for the school and evaluate their work in terms

of the outcomes for pupils. The school provides outstanding value for money and demonstrates excellent capacity to maintain the current quality of learning and care for its pupils.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Excellent provision and leadership ensures that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make an outstanding start to their education and become happy, receptive learners. Children's abilities are very low in relation to expectations for their age when they enter Nursery. This is particularly the case in the area of communication, language and literacy, because English is an additional language for a very high number of children, many of whom do not speak any English when they enter Nursery. Nevertheless, children make excellent progress, and, by the end of Reception, most are working within the early learning goals. High quality teaching of number, and letters and sounds, is expertly linked to exciting classroom and outdoor activities, enabling children to explore and develop skills independently. This gives children's achievement a tremendous boost. Provision for children's welfare is outstanding. Parents greatly appreciate the excellent communications between home and school. They find the opportunities provided for them to observe, support and help to assess their children's progress through discussion with staff, particularly rewarding. Additional support for the significant number of children who are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language is excellent and is exceptionally well supplemented through links with external agencies to promote children's health, welfare and progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the overall quality of pupils' writing and of the accuracy of their mental calculation, to raise standards in English and mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils reach average standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. School assessments show that standards are improving and a significant number of pupils currently in Year 2 and Year 6 are likely to reach above average levels. This represents outstanding achievement for these pupils. Many pupils enter the school at times other than normal, and often from minority ethnic groups. The school's data shows that these pupils make outstanding progress from their starting points on entry to the school. The school excels in identifying pupils' particular needs as soon as they enter the school. Support for small groups and for individuals, from specially designated staff, helps pupils to gain essential language skills very quickly and to progress extremely well in other areas of the curriculum. Similar support for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensures that they too make rapid progress. There was a dip in attainment in the 2008 national tests and assessments, at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This resulted from an unexpected significant intake into these year groups of pupils who were at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language and had other additional needs that affected overall standards. The school has reversed this decline so that the generally rising trend in standards over time continues. Nevertheless, the school acknowledges that there is scope to raise English and mathematics standards further by improving the overall quality of writing and the use of mental calculation in mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils achieve so well because they enjoy every minute of their time in school. They describe their school as, 'the best'. They show excellent attitudes to work and their confidence thrives, as seen in pupils' enthusiasm for performances in school productions and the delightful steel band. Many take advantage of the support available at lunchtime homework clubs to ensure they do their best. At play, pupils are very mindful of others and they are invariably courteous and well mannered. Pupils are adamant that there is no bullying and their regard for one another confirms that racism is not accepted. Pupils are very proud of their Healthy Schools record and the fact that they are so active during and after school. Every pupil has a voice in school affairs. For example, as a result of the conscientious efforts of the school council, pupils and staff have worked together on developing a school website. Pupils' generosity towards those in need develops their very strong sense of community. Opportunities to relate to the world of work supplement the excellent progress they make in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT). Added to their exceptional social skills, the very mature way pupils take responsibilities and gain in confidence mean that they are very well prepared to face future challenges.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Highly effective monitoring, evaluation and review of classroom practice have contributed to the quality of teaching and learning being outstanding. Pupils' resulting excellent progress is rooted in teachers' rigorous use of assessment information to effectively plan their next steps in learning. Relationships are excellent. Pupils feel valued and so teachers get the best from them. Teachers' marking in all subjects is outstanding. It provides pupils with all the guidance they need to help them to improve. Expectations are very high. Challenging tasks are provided to match pupils' varying abilities. Teachers are very skilled at supporting particular groups, for example, by questioning or grouping pupils to extend the pace of their learning. The highly qualified teaching assistants are a vital part of the teaching team. They work exceptionally well in tandem with class teachers and make an outstanding contribution to the achievement of different groups of pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum excites pupils, meets their needs exceptionally well and provides them with a wealth of new experiences. The very strong focus on literacy, numeracy and ICT is made purposeful by the way pupils practise those skills, for example, in art, history or design. Pupils gain immense enjoyment from the outstanding range of additional activities provided. Sport is a great favourite and other activities nurture interests as wide ranging as cheer leading and Canadian rafting. Frequent visits, which support learning in school, and visitors who share their expertise broaden pupils' personal horizons and bring the curriculum to life. Pupils greatly enjoy lessons in Spanish and are currently looking forward to a trip to Spain where they plan to extend links with a Spanish school. Pupils' personal, social, health education and citizenship are extremely well provided for. Pupils understand the importance of safe relationships and

the potential dangers of drugs and other substances. They are very well enabled to make informed choices about their personal well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Parents agree overwhelmingly that their children are well cared for and say they have, 'no regrets' about choosing Varna Street as their school. Pupils endorse that view and say that there is always an adult to care for them when needed. Safeguarding requirements are met and essential safety checks are carried out. Support for the most vulnerable pupils and, at times families, is excellent. Those new to the school are warmly welcomed and given the individual support they need to help them settle quickly to their learning. The school monitors attendance very rigorously and uses a wide range of effective strategies to maintain good levels of attendance and punctuality. The very well attended breakfast club helps many pupils to make a good start to their day. Guidance for pupils about safe practices in their behaviour and relationships is extremely supportive and fully reflected in pupils' attitudes to school. Very well-focused academic support and guidance are tailored to pupils' individual needs and contribute directly to their excellent achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leaders' focus on continuous improvement is the essence of the school's success. Nothing is left to chance. Senior managers hold staff to account for pupils' progress by means of very effective checks on performance. Subject leaders monitor quality and progress within their areas of responsibility and continually improve and expand the curriculum. All know how they are accountable for pupils' progress and work tirelessly as a team to help all pupils to achieve their best. Equality of opportunity is fundamental to the way in which the school works. The school's policy for promoting community cohesion matches its outstanding practice. At Varna Street, not only pupils are learners. The way in which the school includes the whole community in its work, promotes adult learning and forges close links with hard to reach families, is very impressive. All who use the school value the diversity within the community. Pupils respond to global issues through special events such 'Fair Trade Day' and are actively involved in consolidating links with schools abroad.

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	1

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	1
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**

Inspection of Varna Street Primary School, Openshaw, M11 1WP

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. It was really a delight to talk to you because you are so exceptionally polite and well mannered. Your behaviour too is excellent and very well done for coming to school so regularly. Special thanks to all of you who performed during the assemblies. Your steel band is definitely one of the best ever!

Your school is outstanding. You all achieve exceptionally well and we know you have to work extremely hard to do that. You teachers and headteacher are outstanding too and definitely make Varna Street a great place to learn. The grown-ups in school take the very best care of you, just as you all take care of each other.

Despite all the good things we can say about your school, parents, teachers, and your school governors, we are sure you too would like your school to be even more successful. For that to happen we have asked everyone to help you to reach higher standards in English and mathematics. You must keep up your very hard work and keep that lovely steel band swinging!

Good luck with your plans for the new school.