

North Walkden Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105922
Local Authority	Salford
Inspection number	324294
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2009
Reporting inspector	David Halford

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)	151
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 Bernard Pennnington
Headteacher	Mr Christopher Fielding
Date of previous school inspection	15 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Worsley Road North Walkden Worsley Manchester Lancashire M28 3QD
Telephone number	01204 571 039

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2009
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Fax number

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school serves an area of significant social and economic disadvantage. Eligibility for free school meals is higher than usual. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. A small number of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is below average. An Early Years Foundation Stage unit comprises full-time Nursery and Reception classes.

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 with good features. Despite a period of significant change, the school has worked hard to make the improvements required from the previous inspection. The headteacher and his deputy have driven change and development substantially since their recent appointments. They are fully supported by the governing body. Good quality care, guidance and support for pupils are central to the improvements being made. These include good changes to the curriculum, which pupils particularly enjoy, and a strong focus on pupils' personal development and well-being. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, know it is in a period of change and welcome the developments which are taking place.

Pupil numbers have been on a declining trend since the previous inspection, leading to the establishment of mixed-age classes. This has resulted in increased pressure on school finances and significant staff changes. Many of these issues have been addressed successfully. The number of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is rising and the school is nearing the completion of a new leadership team, which is well placed to take the school forward.

Children make good progress in the Nursery and in Reception and this provides them with a secure grounding for later learning. Many children start with levels of skill that are lower than is typical for their age. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the small number who speak English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress and achieve appropriately through both Key Stages, although pupils' progress through Key Stage 2 is uneven over time. This has resulted in below average standards in the basic skills of English, mathematics and science in recent years. The school has worked very hard on this and the work seen in pupils' books during the inspection shows that standards are now broadly average. The school is building on these improvements to secure higher standards by the end of Key Stage 2.

The school is well placed to promote this improvement. Good relationships between staff and pupils encourage pupils to develop good attitudes to their learning and to behave well. Pupils are clearly enjoying the way in which the school is linking subjects together and providing interesting lessons, and supplementing these with an interesting programme of visits, visitors and residential experiences.

There is a positive drive to improve the quality of teaching and the school's leaders are pursuing this with purpose and rigour. While there are good features to many lessons, the quality of teaching is not consistent across the school. In addition, the poor attendance of a small minority of pupils has a negative impact on the overall school's attendance percentages.

Further appointments are still to be made to the senior leadership team and while leadership and management are currently satisfactory overall, there are strong features to the team's current position. Its members have a secure and accurate understanding of the school's current performance and clear and well-founded plans for further development.

The school works well in partnership with its governors and its community. It has made a satisfactory start to its work on community cohesion, the promotion of equal opportunities and the elimination of discrimination. It works well with a range of local partners and also in the wider community. It is well placed to further these developments nationally and internationally. The school provides satisfactory value for money and it has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Nursery with skills that are below those typical for their age, with particular weaknesses in aspects of social and communication skills. They make generally good progress through the Nursery and Reception classes and the majority enter Year 1 with the expected skills in most areas of learning. Teaching is good and has a positive impact on children's learning. Good induction procedures ensure that most children settle effectively and rapidly into school routines. They are encouraged to gain independence in their learning by self-registering on entry to the classroom area, for example. They are cared for well in a secure learning environment, show good attitudes to their work and behave well. Planning systems are good. Children enjoy the practical activities provided for them and are often eager to share their experiences and outcomes with adults. They make good use of the outdoor environment, which provides them with stimulating and exciting experiences throughout the day. Assessment systems are clear and straightforward. Good emphasis is placed on developing children's phonic and number skills and writing experiences are always readily available. Leadership and management are good and the team leader is represented on the school's emerging senior leadership team.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve the attendance of those pupils who miss school frequently.
- Improve the consistency of teaching in order for it to impact more effectively on pupils' learning.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted Inspector before the next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Most pupils enter Year 1 with standards which are broadly average, but there is a significant minority whose standards are below those expected for their age. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress through Years 1 and 2. Through Key Stage 2, pupils' progress has been uneven over time and standards by the end of Year 6 vary considerably. In some years pupils have attained broadly average standards but this has not been a consistent picture. These variations are explained substantially by changes in school staffing in recent years and by insufficient challenge to pupils' learning. Recently, however, changes in leadership in the school have addressed these deficiencies strongly and the impact of these developments can be seen in improving standards in pupils' work and in the outcomes of assessments of progress. Pupils' overall standards and achievement are showing positive improvement. Standards are currently average and achievement satisfactory in Key Stage 2. Appropriate provision is also made for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for the small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Their progress is monitored carefully and accurately and they achieve satisfactorily also.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school works hard to promote this aspect of its work and, as a result, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' good contribution to the life of the school comes through in many areas, such as the work of the school council and of the 'playground leaders'. Good behaviour in and around school contributes well to pupils' sense of safety and security. Their positive attitudes and developing social skills, linked to their improving understanding of their achievement, are beginning to prepare them appropriately for the future. Pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do to stay healthy. Healthy school meals and snacks, physical education and personal, social and health education lessons all enhance this and are reflected in the Activemark award. Attendance is broadly average despite the school's best efforts to improve it. This is disappointing as many children really enjoy their time in school. Records show that it is the persistent absence of a small number of pupils which has a negative effect on the school's overall attendance percentages.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Over time it has lacked consistency and this has contributed to the uneven achievement of the pupils. This inconsistency is being addressed. During the inspection the quality of teaching varied from satisfactory to outstanding. The best lessons promote much engagement and enjoyment on the part of the pupils, through precise classroom management, stimulating tasks which challenge pupils of varying abilities particularly well, and effective deployment of teaching assistants. Where teaching is satisfactory the pace of the lessons is moderate and pupils' interest and engagement are not always maintained fully. Where pupils are following themes which links subjects together, as in the Key Stage 2 work on Greece and Africa, they work very enthusiastically and purposefully. Detailed records of progress are kept and the effective manner in which assessments of pupils' work are made challenges them to further improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school successfully delivers a good curriculum which increasingly places high importance on the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and the personal development of pupils. The curriculum is planned well to ensure that all pupils in mixed-age classes receive varied and relevant programmes of work. Links between subjects are made through themes with visits and visitors, which are carefully chosen to bring the learning to life. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the topics covered, the links between different subjects and the number of trips they experience. Pupils enjoy learning Spanish. They appreciate the good variety of extra-curricular activities and talk excitedly about the annual residential trip, which allows them to experience a wide range of outdoor pursuits.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good levels of care and pastoral support for pupils. Staff know their pupils well and provide a supportive and encouraging environment in which pupils know they are safe. This contributes well to pupils' personal development and well-being. Procedures for assessing risk and keeping pupils safe meet current requirements. Parents are confident that pupils are well looked after and value the support the school provides. The academic progress of each individual pupil is tracked carefully and detailed records are kept. Overall, marking is used effectively to inform pupils about how to improve their work. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the small number who speak English as an additional language is detailed and thorough and there are good links with outside agencies when they are required.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and deputy headteacher work as an effective team and have taken significant steps to raise pupils' standards by seeking to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The school's evaluation of its performance is accurate and realistic. This evaluation has been a very challenging task while managing variable class sizes and significant financial constraints. The progress pupils make is now checked more frequently and rigorously so that school leaders, including governors, know whether the actions they have taken are proving successful. An accurate picture is developing of the school's main strengths and weaknesses; areas for further improvement are clearly identified. All groups of pupils have an equal opportunity to make progress; none are ignored. All these developments are resulting in improved impact on pupils' learning. Challenging targets are set, but not consistently achieved. Communication with parents is good and governors have satisfactory systems in place to identify progress being made. The school correctly evaluates its provision for community cohesion as satisfactory; good developments undertaken within the locality are being broadened to a wider community, but do not comprise national and international links.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

Inspection of North Walkden Primary School, Manchester, M28 3QD

My colleague and I really enjoyed our recent inspection of your school. Thank you very much for your very warm welcome and for looking after us so well. You were very helpful in lessons when we asked you to explain what you were doing and also very friendly around the school. Particular thanks should go to everyone who spoke with us and who helped us to understand why it is that you enjoy your school so much. You behave really well and you have so many opportunities, through the school and 'playground leaders' for example, to support each other.

North Walkden Primary School is a satisfactory and improving school, with some really good work taking place. The staff care for you all well, make sure you feel safe and secure and we think that the arrangements made for your work is good; we know that you really enjoy those lessons where subjects link together, like the ones on Greece and 'Amazing Africa'. There are also some pleasing aspects to the way your school is led and managed. We saw a lot of really interesting lessons.

When we visit schools we also look for things which we feel will help each school to get even better. At the moment, we think that the standards you reach in English, mathematics and science are not really high enough and need to be improved, and we have asked your teachers to try to make sure that their lessons challenge you consistently to try to improve your work. We also think that overall your school's attendance rates need to be improved. We can see that those of you who attend regularly really enjoy yourselves, but there are a small number of pupils who do not attend as regularly as they should.

Thank you once again for all your help when we made our visit to you. We send you all our very best wishes for the future. We do hope that you continue to enjoy learning as much as you do at the moment.