

Alkrington Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105786
Local Authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	336558
Inspection dates	8–9 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Jim Kidd

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 of pupils on the school roll	424
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Chadwick
Headteacher	Mrs Jane George
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at the school development plan, monitoring documents relating to attainment and progress and a range of policies covering arrangements for safeguarding pupils. In addition, inspectors analysed 107 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 18 returned by staff and 197 returned by pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the impact of the school's work to improve pupils' progress and raise their levels of attainment in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2
- challenge and expectations in lessons and whether pupils themselves feel challenged in class
- how well pupils behave and their levels of engagement and interest in learning
- the capacity of leaders and managers to sustain school improvement, particularly in relation to teaching, learning and pupils' progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science
- the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

This school is larger than average. Since the previous inspection, it has absorbed pupils from a neighbouring primary school, which closed. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average but is rising over time. Most pupils are of White British heritage and few pupils are new to learning English. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises Nursery and Reception classes. Alkrington Primary is a nationally accredited Healthy School and also holds the Activemark award. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2009 and the school currently has an interim headteacher. A new headteacher is due to take up the post in January 2010.

The Happy Days before- and after-school club was inspected separately and receives a separate report, which is available on the Ofsted website.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing less well than in all the circumstances it could be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Despite good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' progress and attainment in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

As a result of effective strategies established by senior leaders, pupils' learning, progress and achievement have begun to improve but continue to be inadequate. Attainment in 2009 rose, particularly in English and science, and arrested a year-on-year decline in standards since 2006. Attainment and progress in mathematics, and in both key stages, are still a particular cause for concern and demonstrate that, over time, attainment is too low. Nonetheless, the progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory, because of the good support and guidance they receive from teachers and teaching assistants.

Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory and has improved. The school council meets regularly and 'playtime pals' try hard to involve everyone in activities at playtime and lunchtime. Pupils know the necessity of leading a healthy lifestyle and the eco council gives pupils advice on the importance of looking after the environment. Pupils are justly proud of their annual involvement in the Rochdale Music festival.

Teaching is satisfactory and there are examples of good practice. Levels of challenge and expectation are inconsistent and more able pupils in particular do not always receive tasks which are demanding enough for their needs. Target setting is developing but not all pupils are aware of how to improve. Assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress, although improving, are not yet rigorous enough to inform teachers' planning effectively. There is an increased emphasis on literacy and numeracy in the curriculum, but pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise their numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics. Care, guidance and support are good and adults work hard to support pupils' emotional development and to raise their self-esteem.

Weaknesses in pupils' learning and progress and low attainment over time demonstrate that the school provides inadequate value for money. However, strong leadership from committed and well-informed senior leaders, including the interim headteacher and the deputy headteacher and the clear signs of improvement in pupils' achievement and behaviour, show that capacity for further improvement is satisfactory. Senior leaders recognise that middle leadership needs to be developed and that staff must become more aware of what is expected of them so they can have more influence on driving

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improvement. Nonetheless, senior leaders evaluate school performance accurately and have a clear and accurate vision for what needs to be done. Their actions are already having a positive effect in many areas of school life.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress and raise their attainment in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 by:
 - raising the level and consistency of challenge they receive during lessons
 - raising expectations among all staff of what pupils can do
 - providing more able pupils with work which is matched closely to their learning needs
 - reviewing and improving the teaching of numeracy skills across the curriculum.
- Improve assessment practice in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 by:
 - ensuring that assessment is both regular and rigorous and informs teachers' planning effectively
 - embedding the monitoring of pupils' progress across the curriculum
 - further developing target setting to ensure that all pupils are aware of what they need to do to improve.
- Increase the influence of middle leaders in driving improvement by:
 - clarifying roles and developing procedures in relation to leading developments in the different subjects
 - ensuring that middle leaders are fully aware of the expectations the school has of them.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

Although there was some improvement in pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2009, particularly in English and science, attainment over time is low and pupils' progress and achievement remains inadequate. Since the previous inspection, pupils' progress across the school has slowed and in 2008 pupils' attainment at the end of Years 2 and 6 was below average overall. Attainment was well below average in mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2.

Evidence from lesson observations during the inspection demonstrates that the introduction of more challenging targets by senior leaders and a variety of strategies to promote higher levels of progress for pupils are already beginning to have a positive impact. Although these systems are not fully embedded in all years, pupils' attainment is beginning to rise and pupils in the current Year 6, for example, are on course to reach their targets in English and in mathematics. Where lessons are challenging, pupils have the confidence to express their views. However, pupils' progress in lessons varies. Weaknesses in teaching mean that, too often, it is not good enough. More able pupils in

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particular do not make the progress they should but, because of good support and guidance from both teachers and teaching assistants, the progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory.

Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory and improving, but although pupils say they feel safe in school, they still express concerns about the conduct of a small minority of their peers. Changes made to break times by senior leaders means that they are generally orderly. 'Playtime pals' are effective in making sure that no-one feels left out and lonely. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of a balanced diet and of physical fitness, with the healthy eating tuck shop being popular. They participate well in a range of games and sports and benefit from strong sporting links with local schools. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the community. For example, the school council does what it can to represent the views of its constituents and also selects charities for the school to support. The school has a long tradition of participation in the Rochdale Music Festival. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and pupils show awareness and respect for pupils from different cultures and different religions from their own. The school works hard to promote regular attendance and the learning mentor is effective in challenging absence and promoting punctuality. Pupils' preparation for the next stage in their education and beyond is satisfactory overall, but underachievement in academic subjects, particularly mathematics, is a weakness in this area.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Senior leaders' restructuring of staffing, and its emphasis on improving learning in lessons, is beginning to bear fruit. As a result, teaching is satisfactory and improving. There are examples of good teaching in both key stages. In the best lessons observed, a Year 6 session on journalistic writing for example, teachers had a good command of the subject, treated their pupils with respect and had high expectations of what pupils could achieve. However, pupils are not always required to aim for the highest standards, particularly in mathematics. Challenge is inconsistent and is sometimes insufficient for more able pupils. Work is not demanding enough to meet their learning needs and they remain on simple tasks for too long. Good support in classrooms and also on a one-to-one basis leads to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities making satisfactory progress, which is very often better than that of their peers. Assessment and the monitoring of pupils' progress are developing but are not fully embedded and not rigorous enough to inform teachers' planning. Most pupils are aware of their targets but are less sure of how to improve their work to reach them.

Senior leaders have recognised that pupils' progress in the core subjects is not good enough and have introduced more literacy and numeracy lessons into Key Stage 1 as a result. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical skills in other subjects of the curriculum. Senior leaders are therefore planning to investigate and evaluate the effectiveness of the school's numeracy curriculum in both key stages. Curriculum newsletters have recently been introduced to offer parents and carers a variety of ideas about how they can help their children with their work at home. The curriculum is augmented by support from a range of local groups, the Primary PE group and the Rochdale Music Service for example. Pupils speak highly of the variety of after-school clubs and sports activities and of the minutes they can earn in lessons towards 'golden time', when they can choose the activities they would like to follow.

Pastoral care is a strength of the school. The committed and hard-working team of teaching assistants provides good care and guidance and fosters the emotional well-being of pupils well. The learning mentor does a sterling job in supporting pupils identified as vulnerable and those at risk of underachieving and is most effective in raising their self-esteem. She also works closely with families who are experiencing difficulty. The team of teaching assistants who volunteered to introduce the 'buddying' system continue to have a strong impact on improving behaviour throughout the school. Indeed, pupils regard all the adults who work with them as approachable and feel that there is always someone to talk to if problems arise.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The interim headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, provides a clear vision for the school's future, which is based strongly on the desire to improve pupils' progress and raise their attainment. This vision is shared by staff who comment, 'Morale is high, teamwork is strong and we have a real understanding of where we need to go'. Similarly, the committed and enthusiastic governing body is now beginning to challenge the leadership team and to hold the school to account with increasing rigour. Governors have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

The extensive restructure of staffing in the previous academic year and the senior leaders' emphasis on more challenge in the classroom are improving teaching and beginning to raise pupils' attainment. However, strategies to foster effective middle leadership and to clarify the roles of middle leaders are underdeveloped. Middle leaders are not always fully aware of the expectations the school has of them.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory overall and there are good links with local community groups. Links with the wider Rochdale community and further afield are not established fully. The school's engagement with parents and carers is good and recognised as such by a majority of those who returned the questionnaire. The school adopts good practice across its work in safeguarding and child protection. Procedures are good and meet national guidelines. The school works hard to promote equality of opportunity and to tackle discrimination, but recognises that pupils do not always do as well as they should in their studies, particularly those who are more able.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's skills on entry to the Nursery are overall broadly in line with expectations for their age. Children make good progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage in relation to their starting points, particularly in their personal development and in taking responsibility for their learning. By the end of the Reception, children meet and sometimes exceed the national expectations.

Adults have secure subject knowledge and teaching is good. Resources are used effectively and activities are well planned and based on accurate observations and evaluations carried out by staff on the previous day. Relationships between staff and children are a strength and promote children's self-confidence and desire to learn.

The care and support for children is paramount and staff have strong links with parents and carers for the benefit of the children. Leadership and management are good and senior leaders have an accurate understanding of performance across the area. They recognise, for example, that better lunchtime activities and increased use of computers by children will promote further learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers are happy with what the school does for their sons and daughters and an overwhelming majority believe that it keeps their children safe. A minority have concerns about how effectively the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors accept that there are some examples of poor behaviour but they are also of the view that behaviour is satisfactory overall and that it is improving.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Alkrington Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 107 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 424 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	50	47	53	50	4	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	50	47	54	50	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	29	27	60	56	14	13	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	33	50	47	13	12	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	32	30	62	58	6	6	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	31	55	51	16	15	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	28	69	64	3	3	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	27	25	64	60	7	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	25	62	58	11	10	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	17	46	43	29	27	7	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	16	58	54	19	18	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	24	22	57	53	11	10	4	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	37	35	58	54	10	9	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



13 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Alkrington Primary School, Manchester, M24 1JZ

Dear Pupils

Thank you all so much for welcoming us so warmly to your school. We are particularly grateful to those of you who came to talk to us on Thursday lunchtime and to the dance club members who performed so well on Friday. We also enjoyed the harvest festival assembly and the singing by Year 6.

Although Alkrington Primary is getting better, we still think it needs to make some improvements. We have therefore given it a notice to improve and have asked your teachers to help you make more progress and reach higher standards, especially in mathematics, after you have left the Reception class. We have also asked them to develop their leadership of the different subjects you study and to improve assessment so that you know exactly what you need to do to improve your work.

There are some good things in your school too! For example, you have a keen understanding of what makes a balanced diet and why you should keep yourself fit. The care and guidance which adults offer you are good; the impressive support you get from the adults who work with you means that those of you who often find the work difficult are often making better progress than your classmates. The school also has good Nursery and Reception classes and, across the school, teachers have positive relationships with your parents and carers. The teaching you receive is satisfactory and your behaviour is improving, even though some of you are still not happy with how other pupils behave.

You can help your teachers make the improvements needed by working hard, making sure you always behave properly and coming to school regularly.

Thanks once again, on behalf of all the inspectors, for your kindness and for your help with the inspection.

yours sincerely

Jim Kidd

Lead Inspector

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