

Wild Bank Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106194
Local Authority	Tameside
Inspection number	336632
Inspection dates	2–3 December 2009
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 of pupils on the school roll	101
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J ApThomas
Headteacher	Mr S Lees
Date of previous school inspection	0 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited nine lessons and held meetings with the headteacher, governors, staff, and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work looking at a range of documents, including relevant policies, monitoring reports, minutes of staff and governing body meetings, and the school improvement plan. Pupils' books were sampled. Data on attainment and progress and the 42 questionnaires completed by parents and carers were analysed, as were questionnaires submitted by pupils and staff.

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

- the progress pupils make in writing and mathematics
- pupils' behaviour both around school and in lessons
- how stimulating the curriculum is, given the mixed-age classes
- the quality of care, guidance and support provided by the school
- the appropriateness and quality of plans to improve the school further.

Information about the school

Wild Bank Community School is much smaller than average. Pupil numbers are declining because there are fewer children of primary school age in the catchment area. Most classes include mixed-age groups. There are more boys than girls at the school. High numbers of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. Awards include those for Healthy Schools, Healthy Choice lunches (gold), Activemark, and Eco Schools (silver).

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Wild Bank is a good school which has succeeded in becoming a key part of the local community. Its excellent reputation with parents has resulted from unstinting efforts to involve them in school life and to show them how they can help their children to learn. The school's promotion of equal opportunities is outstanding. Staff work extremely well in partnership with external agencies to meet pupils' individual needs. The care, support and advice given to pupils and families, especially during times of difficulty, are excellent. As a result, pupils love school and want to do well in it. Good attendance and behaviour, and respect for all adults in the school, evidence the good attitudes shown by pupils. They feel exceptionally safe and secure as well as cherished and valued. They grow in confidence, knowing that any worries or problems will be listened to and that they will be helped to tackle them.

Lessons are varied and interesting, with good opportunities for group work. Teachers' excellent teamwork with the skilled group of teaching assistants enables all pupils to make good progress. Whilst work is marked carefully and regularly, too little guidance is given to pupils about the standard they are at, what to focus on next, and what they are capable of in the future.

After rising for two years, national test and assessment results fell in 2009 because of the unexpected absence of key staff. This situation has been resolved and the school has firm evidence that standards are set to return to former levels next summer. Standards in mathematics across the school are lower than those in English and the school is alert to the need for improvement here. The curriculum is good with careful planning of visits, visitors, and clubs to extend pupils' experience. There is, however, too little planned opportunity for pupils to learn new ways of doing things or to do independent research.

Since the last inspection the school has improved pupil behaviour and attendance levels, and engaged more closely with families and the community. Regular and shared evaluation gives staff a clear insight into how effectively the school is working. Accurate tracking data enable a close eye to be kept on pupils' progress. Senior staff are ambitious for the school to develop further. These things, coupled with the thorough oversight of the governing body, give the school good capacity for future improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- improving calculation and estimation skills
- increasing pupils' skills in applying mathematics to other subjects and situations
- Make the curriculum more stimulating by planning more opportunities for pupils to

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be creative and to undertake independent work and research.

- Improve assessment by making sure that pupils have a clear grasp of the standards they have reached, their potential, and how to improve their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils behave well in lessons and show willingness to listen and work. Most are keen to heed and act on advice from adults. They learn how to work in groups, sharing tasks and helping each other. Particularly impressive is how they adjust to the 'open plan' nature of the school building, not allowing what is happening in other parts of the building to distract them. From low levels of skill on entry to the Nursery, pupils make good progress across the school to reach broadly average standards by the end of Key Stage 2. Whilst many pupils have limitations in reading and writing skills, they know strategies to tackle these and show persistence in trying to improve their work. Daily work on letters and sounds is having a tangible impact on pupils' confidence in reading and tackling new words. The status teachers give to oral work is reflected in pupils becoming good listeners and competent speakers, able to discuss work and share ideas. This particularly helps the many pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Quality support from the excellent team of classroom assistants further enables these pupils to feel confident in tackling work such that they take a full part in all lessons and progress as well as their peers.

Inspection evidence confirms that pupils are making good progress overall. However, standards in mathematics across the school are lower than those in writing. Moreover, while pupils generally make good progress in writing, their progress in mathematics is no better than satisfactory. This is because marking of mathematics work is less helpful than that in other areas, and pupils struggle to apply what they have learned in mathematics to other situations. For instance, many make mistakes in measuring because they lack estimation skills. Others have difficulty using subtraction to explain how long a monarch reigned and their age at death.

Pupils feel totally safe in school and this allows them to concentrate on work, although a minority can let their attention drift if they do not get adult attention. Regular physical education, extensive play areas and good information about diet and hygiene improve their awareness of healthy living. The pupil council, eco committee and wildlife club see them making a good contribution to school. Pupils are proud of the part they have played in overseeing the building of the 'Trim Trail', growing and harvesting crops in the allotment, and interviewing deputy headship candidates. They have a good and growing awareness of the beliefs and cultures of people in other areas and countries, thanks to visits and visitors.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Carefully planned and interesting lessons ensure that pupils make good progress. Teachers are skilled at preparing tasks to enable pupils of differing ages and abilities to learn new skills. Group work is effective, the more so because pupils are encouraged to share ideas and opinions. Teachers and learning assistants spread their time around pupil groups, giving them time to think things out. The occasional inattention of some pupils is not always picked up quickly enough by teachers. Lessons move at a brisk pace because teachers are good at explaining tasks and their purpose. The excellent relationships they have with pupils result in good cooperation. Teachers make effective use of interactive activities to focus pupils' attention and highlight learning. Pupils' work is regularly assessed and the school tracks their progress closely. This information is well used by teachers in planning tasks with a suitable level of challenge. Inspection evidence confirms the school's own monitoring findings that shortcomings exist in marking.

The curriculum provides a good balance of basic skills, including information and communication technology, as well as topic work, personal education and practical work. The introduction of daily work on letters and sounds and brisk revision tasks during morning registration stimulate learning. There is, however, a lack of planning for those creative and research activities which would enable pupils to pursue different ideas independently. Clubs such as cheerleading, chess and gardening give pupils a sense of pride and achievement. Visits to such places as Ordsall Hall and Manchester Museum bring history and other cultures alive. Friday's 'Golden Time' choice of activities enables pupils to follow their own interests. During wet lunchtimes the school is a hive of

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activity, pupils having learned the pleasure of purposeful activity rather than just casually passing the time.

Central to the school's work is the welfare of pupils. Both parents and pupils appreciate the great lengths the school goes to, to make pupils feel welcomed, valued and special. From the headteacher's presence in the yard as pupils come to school to the extensive and excellent work of the learning mentor in bridging any gaps between home and school, pupil care is paramount. Pupils know that their concerns and ideas will be listened to; parents that they can turn to school for advice and support. The high proportion of pupils with, special educational needs and/or disabilities flourish because the school is untiring in its efforts to help them make progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

There has been good progress since the last inspection. All staff understand and share the school's philosophy and are committed to turning it into practice. They are very proud to work at the school and feel encouraged to share in planning for improvement. Monitoring of lesson quality and checking teachers' marking and planning are used to highlight what works well and where improvement is needed. Staff discussion and training follow on from this. The headteacher has worked hard and successfully to reach out into the local community. Adult classes and community surgeries have helped break down barriers. Parents and carers feel welcomed into the school and a busy Christmas Fair during the inspection showed their support for it. The headteacher has shown resolve in tackling issues and keeping the school on an even keel during a time of significant staff changes. The local authority continues to offer the good support they provided during this period.

Governors are well informed, influential, and keen to extend their already useful links with classes. Extensive and well thought out safeguarding procedures meet all current requirements. The school is concerned to do its best for all pupils and searches hard for the most effective ways to do this. All pupil groups make equally good progress and the tolerance and respect pupils show for everyone in the school community is a testament to the quality of the school's work in ensuring equality of opportunity. A highly secure and cohesive community itself, the school is actively and successfully seeking ways of extending pupils' opportunities to understand and experience a wider range of cultures and beliefs.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

When children join the school many have low skills compared to national expectations. Good and extensive links with families ensure that staff know how to help individual children. Children quickly settle into the loving and lively setting. The excellent example set by the strong staff team helps children learn the value of taking turns, working together and helping each other. Social skills come on in leaps and bounds. Children learn routines like how to mix paints for colours, store paintings so that they will dry, and clean up after themselves. Spoken language is a major focus and children grow in confidence in explaining things or acting out nursery rhymes such as 'Red Riding Hood' and 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff' using puppets and models. The balance between structured activities and more open choice is very good, although some boys spend too much time with preferred toys. Outdoor provision has improved markedly since the last inspection. Even though the weather was poor, children enjoyed well organised road safety role play in an outside area. The 'Twigloo' allows reading, acting and discussion to take place outdoors in good weather. Good leadership and management, allied to exemplary teamwork, ensure that children thrive, enjoy their introduction to school life, and make good progress.

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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

Parents and carers have great confidence in the school. Almost all are impressed by the high quality of care and support for pupils, a typical comment being: 'All the staff are supportive and always available to answer questions'. Parents especially appreciate how happy and keen to go to school their children are, how individual pupils' needs are taken into account, and the close attention paid to making pupils feel safe and secure. Families feel strongly encouraged to get involved with the school and to help their children learn. A few have reservations about how the school deals with misbehaviour. Inspectors feel that whilst teachers occasionally overlook pupil inattention, they do ensure good behaviour both in lessons and around the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Wild Bank Community 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 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 42 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 101 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	74	10	24	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	34	81	8	19	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	30	71	12	29	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	74	10	24	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	31	74	10	24	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	71	12	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	79	9	21	0	0	0	0
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)	30	71	12	29	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	74	9	21	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	57	15	36	3	7	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	62	15	36	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	28	67	13	31	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	37	88	4	10	0	0	1	2

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.



Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wild Bank Community School, Stalybridge, SK15 2PG

As you know we recently came to inspect your school to see how well you are getting on. It was a pleasure to share the two days with you. The way you welcome and show interest in visitors is excellent as is your enthusiasm for singing, which you do with gusto! Special thanks to the Pupil Council and those older pupils who showed me round school for giving up time to tell me what they thought about school.

Yours is a good school. All the adults in the school put a lot of effort into making sure that you are safe, happy and keen to learn. Your good attendance and behaviour help you to make good progress. Whilst things like phonics and doing extra writing are helping your English, we do think that the school could enable you to do better at mathematics. You get on really well with each other and with teachers, and this is important. Teachers make sure that lessons are interesting, but some of you occasionally let your attention wander too far. Teachers work hard to mark your work thoroughly but they need to give you a clearer idea of how well you are doing, what to concentrate on, and what to aim for. Whilst you get lots of exciting trips and interesting visitors, work in school could allow you to be more creative and able to work on your own to follow up ideas. Everyone in the school puts your welfare first, following the excellent example set by the headteacher and learning mentor. Governors are working hard to make sure that the school continues to improve. For instance, since we last visited much has been done to make outdoor play areas better.

We have agreed with staff and governors that extra attention to three things will help you to do even better in future. These are:

- helping you to do better at mathematics, so that you can work things out more quickly and correctly, and can use this in other lessons
- making sure that you get more opportunity to be creative, and follow up and research ideas on your own
- using marking and reports to give you a clearer idea of things you do well, how you could develop them, and what standards you are reaching in subjects.

You can help by continuing to attend regularly, giving your full attention to what you are learning, and making sure that you meet (and beat!) any targets you are given.

Best wishes to you and the school for future success and happiness.

Yours faithfully

Jon Lövgreen, Lead Inspector

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