

# Mab's Cross Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106405
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wigan
<b>Inspection number</b>	309116
<b>Inspection date</b>	19 September 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Colin Smith

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	432
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr D Barber
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs S Santus
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 November 2003
<b>School address</b>	Standishgate Wigan Lancashire WN1 1XL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01942 749200
<b>Fax number</b>	01942 749600

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

The school is much larger than average in size. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is broadly average. Although the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, the school draws children from a mixed community. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Approximately 5% of the pupils speak English as an additional language. However, many of these pupils only remain in school for a few months before returning to their country of origin.

The following issues were investigated: pupils' achievement mainly in writing; teachers' use of assessment in setting tasks well matched to pupils' different learning needs; and the extent to which leaders check the work of the school to make further improvements. Evidence was gathered from observation of lessons, pupils' work, discussions with staff, governors and pupils, and a scrutiny of school documents and questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Mab's Cross is an effective and successful school that provides good value for money. Comments such as, 'I am pleased with the standard of education and the level of care provided for my children.' typify the views of most parents.

A good level of care and support is provided, particularly for the most vulnerable pupils. A good partnership between parents, health professionals and school staff ensures that pupils are safeguarded and many of the barriers to learning are removed. The school has gained an inclusion award for the way it helps to integrate special school pupils into mainstream education. The personal and academic guidance pupils receive is satisfactory and improving as teachers provide increasingly clearer messages on how pupils can achieve their targets.

Pupils' personal development is good. Their good spiritual, moral and social awareness is reflected in the concern they show towards others and in their enjoyment of school. Attendance is average, but adversely affected by families making extended visits to their country of origin. Pupils show distaste for bullying or racism, although they have only limited awareness of cultural diversity. Pupils' behaviour is good and often excellent in lessons. Exclusions are rare. The school is highly effective in encouraging pupils to share in decision making and to take responsibility. Pupils are exemplary as school council members and buddies. Comments made by pupils such as, 'Buddies understand your feelings and sort your problems out.' illustrate the high degree of social harmony in school. Pupils acquire a good awareness of safe and healthy lifestyles and are well prepared for the future in developing secure literacy and numeracy skills.

Pupils achieve well overall. The strong emphasis on word building skills in Years 1 and 2 enables pupils to achieve particularly well in reading. Standards by the end of Year 2 are broadly average in mathematics and writing and above average in reading. From Years 3 to 6, pupils achieve well in reading, mathematics and science. Standards in these subjects have been significantly higher than average in recent years. In contrast, standards in writing have never been higher than average and are occasionally below. This is why writing is the school's current improvement priority. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in response to the carefully graded tasks and feedback provided by teachers. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language achieve well, particularly in acquiring a command of English. Able, gifted and talented pupils largely fulfil their potential, although a small proportion of them do not reach the high standards of which they are capable in writing.

The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are very well managed. Pupils know what they are expected to learn and work purposefully towards their goals. Stimulating approaches, such as drama and mathematical games, keep pupils interested and enhance their understanding. The pace of lessons usually moves along swiftly, except when too many pupils are asked to read out their written work. Teachers use assessment well to provide tasks that match pupils' different learning needs. Pupils are often taught in ability groups and sets and respond positively to the good level of challenge which is provided. The teaching of reading and mathematics is consistently good and more successful than the teaching of writing. Pupils are sometimes asked to complete pieces of writing independently with insufficient guidance from the teacher. On these occasions, their written work does not noticeably improve. In one lesson, the teacher worked with a large group discussing and changing words and phrases to make the writing fluent and more interesting. This is where learning to write is at its best.

The broad and rich curriculum provided is carefully modified to meet pupils' diverse learning and language needs. The strong thread of personal, social, health and citizenship education plus an excellent range of additional activities, including sport, music, French and Spanish, makes an important contribution to pupils' personal and social development and lifelong learning.

The school benefits from good leadership and management. Planning for the future takes full account of the school's performance and incorporates the views of the community. The school improvement plan provides clear direction in helping the school to maintain good standards and excellent facilities. Governors are well informed and successful in holding the school to account. Extensive use is made of target setting. The process is rooted in a detailed analysis of pupils' progress to ensure that the targets set are sufficiently challenging. Lessons are observed to help senior staff to monitor and improve teaching and learning. Year 3 and 4 pupils' mathematical skills improved significantly as a result of such intervention. However, subject leaders are not sufficiently involved in the process to enable them to check the impact of their recommendations, for example, in writing. The good quality of school self-evaluation is borne out by the inspection findings which mirror the school's view of itself in almost every aspect. The school has acted purposefully on previous inspection issues, especially in seeking parents' views and making maximum use of teaching assistants. This indicates that the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 3**

Opportunities to inspect the Foundation Stage in full were limited because it was the first full day of children starting school. The school judges the effectiveness of the Foundation Stage to be good. However, assessments of Reception children's achievement, over recent years, show that they enter school with attainment broadly expected for their age, make satisfactory progress and reach the goals expected for their age in all areas of learning. The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory but progress is hampered because children have no immediate access to well equipped outdoor play. Children's first full day in school is eased by good induction sessions held earlier. Consequently, the vast majority of children settle in quickly, busily exploring the good range of colourful activities provided. Good relationships between staff and children are already evident in the reassuring way in which children are encouraged to talk about their experiences.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the teaching of writing to raise pupils' achievement.
- Ensure that subject leaders check the impact their recommendations are having on the quality of teaching and pupils' learning.

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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?	2
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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

How good is 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
How well 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	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 the learners' needs?	2
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

<sup>1</sup> Grade 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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 for welcoming me into your school and answering my questions so politely. I enjoyed my visit and would like to share my findings with you.

I agree with your views that Mab's Cross is a good school. Teaching is good and you work hard in your lessons. This is why most of you make good progress and standards are above average in reading, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6.

It is very evident that the school takes good care of you, both in school and on educational visits. Teachers work hard to make your lessons interesting and the school provides an impressive range of out-of-school activities. You show your enjoyment and appreciation by behaving well. In fact your behaviour in many lessons is excellent. I was very impressed at how seriously you carry out your responsibilities as council members, buddies and play leaders.

Although your school is very large, it runs smoothly. School leaders and governors lead the school well, constantly striving to make improvements.

I have two recommendations to help improve the school further.

- I have asked teachers to try to raise your achievement in writing by working alongside you when you write to help you to choose words carefully and express your ideas clearly. You can help by checking your written work to make sure you aim for those targets provided by your teachers.
- I have also asked teachers in charge of the main subjects to visit different lessons to check how well their suggestions to improve your learning are being put into practice.