

Moor Allerton Preparatory School

131 Barlow Moor Road, West Didsbury, Manchester, Lancashire M20 2PW

Inspection dates

20–22 November 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders, managers and staff provide a happy, nurturing and welcoming environment where pupils thrive and behave well.
- Pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum which prepares them very well for their next stage of education.
- Parents, carers and staff recognise the positive changes that the headteacher has made since her appointment.
- The motivated and hardworking staff value regular opportunities for professional development.
- Physical education (PE) is a strength of the school. Pupils take part in a wide range of sports and activities.
- The school provides a wealth of opportunities for pupils to develop their creative skills across the arts and in music.
- Pupils leave the school with well-developed skills and confidence in mathematics.
- Pupils enjoy reading. They read with confidence and for pleasure. In the infant classes, leaders are developing systems to improve phonics teaching further.
- Pupils learn to write with precision, using grammar and punctuation accurately. However, pupils have limited opportunities to develop their writing skills in subjects other than English.
- Staff are vigilant in ensuring pupils' safety and well-being. Pupils feel safe and cared for well. All the independent school standards are met.
- The early years classes are vibrant and nurturing. However, the outdoor provision does not provide opportunities for children to explore, investigate and play.
- Leaders are aware that in some classes, staff do not use questioning effectively to check pupils' learning and develop their thinking.
- Leaders' systems for checking pupils' progress in mathematics and English are still developing.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, by improving systems to check pupils' progress in mathematics and English, so that leaders have a precise view of the effectiveness of teaching.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, by:
 - providing pupils with more frequent opportunities to practise and develop their skills in writing across the curriculum
 - embedding recent improvements in how phonics is taught in early years and key stage 1
 - developing staff's use of questioning to challenge and extend pupils' understanding
 - ensuring that children in early years have regular opportunities to explore, investigate, work and play independently in the outdoor learning environment.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and directors share high ambitions for the school. They have strengthened teaching with new appointments to the staff. The school building has been expanded and improved to provide an attractive, spacious and well-resourced learning environment for pupils. The proprietor, leaders and managers have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Staff are extremely positive about the headteacher and the leadership of the school. They feel valued by leaders and are highly motivated to work together as a team. Staff share leaders' determination to move the school from strength to strength. They appreciate the many opportunities they are given to develop their own practice and to take on additional areas of responsibility.
- Staff, parents and carers, and pupils describe the school as 'a family'. As staff said, 'Moor Allerton has a family atmosphere which bonds the staff, parents and children together'.
- Leaders have designed a broad and balanced curriculum. Visits to museums and art galleries enrich pupils' learning and build on their prior knowledge. A wide range of trips develop pupils' confidence and resilience, including residential trips in the junior classes to Edinburgh, Delamere Forest and skiing in France.
- Leaders prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. For example, in assemblies and lessons across the curriculum, pupils learn about British values, such as the rule of law. Pupils' diverse religions are celebrated and pupils learn about other cultures. Parents come into school to share with pupils their experience of different faiths.
- Through a carefully planned programme of activities and lessons, leaders develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well. Pupils learn to respect others and value differences, including those of ethnicity and religion. The rich and diverse programme of visits expands pupils' understanding of their society.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education, including preparation for entrance examinations and mock interviews for Year 6 pupils. Leaders raise pupils' aspirations further through visits from parents, who talk about their professions and vocations.
- Leaders have developed systems to check pupils' learning and progress in mathematics and English. They have recognised that further development of these systems to check on pupils' progress would enhance the monitoring of teaching and learning, including pupils' progress across key stages.
- Leaders have ensured that teachers' areas of responsibility match their skills and specialisms. Subject leaders monitor teaching regularly, including through learning walks, checks on pupils' written work and talking with pupils. This means that subject leaders are well placed to develop learning further. They use their skills and knowledge to support their colleagues in developing their teaching.
- The vast majority of parents share the staff's very positive view of the school. Typical comments on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, praised the school's nurturing environment and the breadth of the curriculum. A small number of parents would like to

see improved communication between school and home. However, other parents praised recent improvements in communication.

- Leaders plan effective additional support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They make regular checks on the progress of this group of pupils to ensure that teaching matches their learning needs effectively.

Governance

- Leadership arrangements are clear. Strategic oversight and funding are provided through governance, which is made up of directors, including the proprietor. Governors visit the school very regularly.
- The headteacher and governors have a shared, ambitious vision for the school. They have invested in the school's infrastructure and refurbishment, and keep a careful check on health and safety arrangements. They are effectively developing the skills of leaders by providing continuing professional development.
- Governors challenge and support school leaders to keep improving the school. They check pupils' progress to monitor the impact of leaders' actions. Governors have identified that further development of assessment systems will improve the precision of the checks they make on teaching and learning.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's safeguarding procedures are of a high quality and fit for purpose. Leaders have provided staff with regular safeguarding training. This enables staff to quickly identify signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect. They know pupils well and pupils feel comfortable in bringing any worries and concerns to staff. The designated safeguarding leads have completed further safeguarding training and are quick to seek help and advice from other professionals when needed.
- Safeguarding and related policies are published on the school's website. They are detailed and take full account of the latest government guidance.
- All staff have received first-aid and fire safety training. Governors ensure that appropriate checks are made on the suitability of staff to work with children.
- The site supervisor and staff keep a careful check on site safety. Staff are well organised in ensuring that the busy school carpark is safe and the school gates are locked during school time. The site is safe and secure and the school building is very well maintained.
- Pupils feel safe and they are taught to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. When online, they know to keep their identities private and understand why they should not share personal information. In assemblies and lessons, pupils learn about different forms of bullying and other dangers that they may face. Leaders ensure that pupils know how to seek help if they feel at risk.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and ensure that pupils typically make good progress in their learning across the curriculum.
- In mathematics, staff use a wide range of practical resources and activities to develop pupils' understanding of number. During the inspection, for example, in Year 1, pupils were sorting and counting money with great concentration. They solved mathematical problems with enthusiasm, discussing their reasoning with their peers and teacher. In key stage 2, teachers set challenging work for pupils, who go on to learn to solve tricky mathematical problems and calculations with confidence and accuracy.
- Specialist teachers provide regular opportunities to develop pupils' learning further. In art, for example, pupils work with a range of different materials and develop their skills in painting and sketching. Pieces of pupils' attractive and bright artwork enhance the school environment. Through visits to local galleries, pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of art and artists.
- Staff plan many opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in music and to sing and play to audiences at school events and local festivals.
- Teachers use their assessments of pupils' knowledge to plan learning activities that build on pupils' prior learning. Many teachers use questioning frequently and skilfully to check pupils' understanding and develop their learning, but this good practice is not currently consistent across the school.
- In the infant classes, staff plan regular phonics lessons to develop children's phonic knowledge and understanding. Leaders have taken steps to improve this aspect of teaching. A range of resources are used to enhance lessons and teaching. Staff have received training to develop their skills. However, there is still work to be done to ensure that phonics teaching is consistently strong and so has the maximum, positive impact on pupils' learning.
- Teachers encourage pupils to read widely and often. Teachers use good-quality texts to inspire pupils and to develop their use and understanding of ambitious vocabulary. Pupils read confidently to others, including in class and in assemblies.
- Pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling are developed well in English lessons. Pupils' handwriting is neat, and they write for a range of different purposes, including narrative writing. In both key stage 1 and key stage 2, pupils have limited opportunities to refine and improve their writing skills in curriculum subjects other than English.
- The school is very well resourced, and this enriches the quality of teaching and learning. Pupils from across the school regularly use a specialist dance studio. The attractive school library is well stocked with a wide range of books and is used regularly and valued by pupils. Teachers and pupils use a wide range of computing equipment to support learning.
- In science, teachers use a wide range of resources to support pupils' learning. Pupils develop their skills and knowledge by planning and carrying out investigations and tests.
- The homework set by teachers is helpful and develops pupils' learning, particularly in mathematics and English.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Positive and nurturing relationships between teachers and pupils support learning effectively. A high staff–pupil ratio means that staff know pupils well. Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to talk to adults and receive support when needed.
- Staff develop pupils' confidence through the many opportunities they have to shine, including in sports, music and drama. Through regular class assemblies and school events, pupils quickly develop confidence in speaking and performing to an audience.
- Pupils have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe, including online. A range of visitors, including healthcare professionals, the fire service and police, develop pupils' understanding of how to stay safe. Older pupils learn about safety when cycling on roads.
- Leaders plan a variety of activities to promote pupils' well-being, including yoga and meditation sessions. Teachers plan engaging activities in lessons for pupils to discuss their feelings, for example through drama and role play.
- Pupils take part in a wide range of charitable fund-raising and the choir sings for the local community at Christmas. Pupils relish the many leadership opportunities that they are given, including being school prefects. Through such experiences, pupils develop as caring and considerate citizens.
- Through lessons and assemblies, pupils learn about different types of bullying and what they should do if they feel worried or concerned. The pupils spoken with during the inspection were adamant that bullying does not happen in school. They are confident that staff listen to them if they have any concerns.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves healthy and the importance of regular exercise. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils were confidently leading a warm-up session during a PE lesson. Staff encourage pupils to develop a love of sport and exercise, including dance.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are extremely polite and welcoming to visitors.
- Pupils wear their smart school uniforms with pride. They are proud to be members of the school. Pupils are confident and self-assured and enjoy their time in school. In classes, pupils listen to adults and follow instructions quickly. They work cooperatively with their peers and their written work is well presented.
- Around school, pupils are calm and show consideration for others, holding open doors for adults and moving sensibly between classrooms. They play well together at breaktimes.
- Pupils value their education and their attendance is high.
- At times in key stage 2, pupils have limited opportunities to discuss their ideas and reasoning and share their points of view. While conduct on the playground is good, the high ratio of staff to pupils means that pupils are not consistently required to learn to manage their own behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils are prepared well for their next steps in education. They leave the school as confident learners with skills across a range of subjects. Pupils develop good manners and respect for others.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics to achieve high standards. The school's checks on pupils' learning show that pupils attain well for their age, particularly in mathematics. A high proportion of pupils are offered places at independent schools, including through the award of scholarships.
- Pupils read with maturity and understanding by the time they leave the school. However, in some infant classes, a small proportion of pupils' learning in phonics is less secure. Teachers plan additional support for pupils who are struggling to ensure that they catch up quickly and are well prepared for key stage 2.
- In key stage 2, teachers provide pupils with challenging work in mathematics. Pupils, including the most able, make good progress and reach the higher standards of which they are capable.
- In key stage 1, pupils develop confidence in number and place value. This is because teachers develop pupils' understanding with a range of practical activities.
- Across the school, pupils make good progress in writing. Their writing is fluent and well-presented. However, pupils' writing skills are not honed and developed across the wider curriculum. Pupils do not have the opportunity to make even stronger progress by writing frequently and for a wide range of purposes.
- Pupils in key stages 1 and 2, including the most able, make good progress across the wider curriculum. This is because specialist teachers develop pupils' skills and keep a careful check on learning. For example, in PE, pupils develop their skills across a wide range of sports and activities, including basketball, netball, dance and gymnastics.
- Leaders have placed a strong emphasis on developing pupils' skills in music. Pupils regularly perform to audiences. The school is proud of recent successes at a youth musical festival, with soloists and the choir winning prizes.
- Pupils with SEND make good progress from their varied starting points, in line with other pupils in the school.

Early years provision

Good

- Children make good progress through the Nursery and Reception classes. Leaders' assessments show that the proportion of children reaching a good level of development was above the school's expectations for the age group in 2018. Children leaving early years are prepared well for the challenges of Year 1.
- The learning environments across early years are safe and secure. Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards and welfare requirements have been met. Children are nurtured from the moment they enter the school and safeguarding is a strength. Children collect and use equipment safely and move calmly around the classrooms. Adults supervise children very well.

- Children in the early years classrooms behave well. They settle quickly into school life and learn to be cooperative and enthusiastic learners. Children listen carefully to teachers and staff and follow instructions quickly.
- Each of the early years classrooms is bright, well resourced and engaging for children. During the inspection, children in Nursery were playing happily in the shop role-play area, opening tills and counting money. Others were playing cooperatively in the construction area. Children's social skills are enhanced through their play.
- Through regular reading of engaging books, children develop their vocabulary. In the Reception class, children were observed sharing their ideas with great enthusiasm during a session looking at the story of 'The Gruffalo'.
- Staff give children plenty of opportunities to develop their mathematical knowledge, using a range of engaging resources. Teachers and staff plan practical activities that hold children's interest and enhance their learning. Children make good progress in mathematics.
- The Nursery classrooms provide a warm and nurturing environment, including for two-year-olds. Staff model language and arrange learning areas thoughtfully, including cosy quiet places indoors to play calmly or rest. The very youngest children settle quickly and play and learn with concentration and enthusiasm.
- Through phonics sessions, children develop confidence in reading and read for pleasure. Adults listen to children read regularly and reading books are matched to children's abilities. Leaders have taken steps to improve phonics teaching, so that children make stronger progress in reading. These changes are still embedding as staff develop their skills with training and support from leaders.
- Children apply their phonics knowledge in their independent writing. Their workbooks show that they make good progress in writing.
- Teachers plan appropriate support for any children who have additional needs. Through work with parents and other professionals, leaders make sure that children have the early help they need to settle well and make good progress in their learning.
- The leader for early years works effectively with colleagues from other schools. For example, she attends assessment moderations to ensure that her measures of children's progress are accurate. Staff in early years keep their skills and knowledge up to date through regular training.
- Leaders and staff communicate effectively with parents. For example, teachers send regular updates of children's learning to parents electronically. Parents share information about what their children have been learning at home. They have regular opportunities to visit the school, including termly parents' evenings, stay and play sessions, and phonics workshops.
- Children learn to value and celebrate differences, including other religions. For example, children made brightly coloured cards to celebrate Diwali as part of their learning about Hinduism.
- The outdoor learning areas provide for children to develop their physical skills, and include climbing equipment and bikes. However, staff do not routinely plan for children to explore, investigate and play independently outdoors.

School details

Unique reference number	105585
DfE registration number	352/6001
Inspection number	10053721

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	192
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Alpha Schools Limited
Chair	Ali Khan
Headteacher	Adriana Ewart-Jones
Annual fees (day pupils)	£8,550
Telephone number	0161 445 4521
Website	www.moorallertonschool.co.uk
Email address	office@moorallertonschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Moor Allerton School was founded in 1914. It is registered for boys and girls aged two to 11.
- The headteacher was appointed in June 2016.
- There is a small proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- The school prepares pupils for examinations to independent and grammar schools.

- The school was previously inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate in September 2015. This was a regulatory compliance inspection. At that time, the school did not meet Part 4 of the standards.

Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector examined the premises with the headteacher.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes and across a range of subjects, including joint observations with the headteacher. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' written work in mathematics and English and from across the curriculum.
- Inspectors listened to a group of pupils from Year 2, Year 4 and Year 5 read.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils formally in groups and informally in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors made observations of pupils' behaviour during lessons, at playtimes and when pupils were moving around the school.
- Meetings were held with the representatives of the proprietorial body, the headteacher and other senior leaders, middle leaders and teaching staff.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including school policies, safeguarding procedures, health and safety checks, and risk assessments. Inspectors also scrutinised the school development plan and information about pupils' progress.
- Inspectors scrutinised attendance and behaviour records and the school's admissions register.
- Inspectors took account of 72 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, and nine responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Elizabeth Stevens, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Shutt

Ofsted Inspector

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