

Gaskell Community Primary School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 105155 |
| Local authority | Bolton |
| Inspection number | 377187 |
| Inspection dates | 29 February 2012–1 March 2012 |
| Lead inspector | Steve Isherwood HMI |

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

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|--|---|
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 330 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Pat Hinchliffe |
| Executive Headteacher | Ian Dryburgh |
| Date of previous school inspection | 16 September 2008 |
| School address | Thomas Holden Street Bolton BL1 2QG |
| Telephone number | 01204 333666 |
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Introduction

Inspection team

Steve Isherwood
Sheila Loughlin
Steve Rigby

Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 16 lessons and parts of lessons taught by 13 teachers. Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff, groups of pupils and a representative from the local authority. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of school policies and documentation relating to safeguarding and strategic planning, examples of pupils' work, assessment data and monitoring records. They also scrutinised 191 inspection questionnaires returned by parents and carers and took account of those completed by staff and pupils. No responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) were available to assist in planning the inspection.

Information about the school

Gaskell Community School is larger than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The majority of pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds with a significant proportion joining or leaving the school during a key stage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average and around a third of the pupils are at the early stages of learning to speak English. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including those with a statement of special educational needs is just below the national average. The school does not meet the government's current floor standard for primary schools, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

The headteacher who was in post at the time of the previous inspection resigned in December 2011. An executive headteacher from a neighbouring school was appointed at the end of the summer term 2011. The deputy headteacher was appointed acting headteacher in February 2012. The governing body is in the process of recruiting a permanent headteacher.

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 | 4 |
| Achievement of pupils | 4 |
| Quality of teaching | 3 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | 2 |
| Leadership and management | 3 |

Key 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 significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could be reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' attainment and progress.
- The overall effectiveness of the school is inadequate. It is not satisfactory because pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 is consistently low; pupils underachieve in Key Stage 2, particularly in mathematics and writing, and they make insufficient progress based on their starting points in Year 3. Too few pupils are reaching the higher levels in their work because activities in lessons are not always demanding enough.
- The quality of teaching has improved significantly over the last year and is now satisfactory. However, in the past it was less effective and led to pupils underachieving in Key Stage 2. The teaching observed in the inspection was mostly good with some examples of outstanding practice in both Key Stages. Lessons now typically see busy pupils responding with enthusiasm to a range of tasks and activities. Nevertheless, there is some variability in how well activities are planned for higher-ability pupils. Some of the teaching is over-directed and pupils are not always engaged in their learning. There are insufficient opportunities in mathematics for pupils to test and deepen their knowledge in problem-solving and investigative activities. Pupils are not always given enough opportunities to develop their writing skills across the curriculum. The proportion of good and better lessons is growing but needs to increase further to raise pupils' attainment.
- Pupils' behaviour and safety are good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are keen and enthusiastic learners. When asked to express their views about the school they found it very difficult to think of any improvements they would like to see. There was strong praise for how the current leaders have improved the school over the last year, the high levels of care they receive and the wide range of opportunities on offer.
- Current leaders have demonstrated the capacity to improve the school. There is evidence of sustainable improvement in teaching and learning. They keep a close eye

on performance and are clear about the direction the school must take to secure this momentum. For example, they correctly recognise that maintaining the focus on improving teaching and learning is a key priority and is central to accelerating pupils' progress and raising their attainment.

- The school has several elements that indicate potential for improvement. Staff are committed to improving the school and are working effectively to turn things around. Increasing numbers of pupils are making better progress than previously, particularly in reading, as a result of improvements to provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment and accelerate their progress at Key Stage 2, particularly in mathematics and writing by:
 - maintaining the focus on improving teaching and learning
 - increasing the proportion of good and better lessons
 - ensuring that more pupils reach the higher levels in their work
 - using assessment information more consistently to ensure that lessons are based on what pupils know and can do and what they need to learn next
 - broadening the range of teaching styles to stimulate pupils' greater involvement in learning
 - providing more opportunities in mathematics for pupils to use and apply their skills in problem-solving, investigative and practical activities, and in writing to practise their skills in a range of subjects.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

In the stronger lessons, pupils are fully engaged in their learning and are eager to please. Their enthusiasm for learning increases when tasks are exciting and captivating. They particularly enjoy activities where they can discuss and share their ideas with others. Pupils in Year 1, for example, made excellent progress in learning to enjoy language and stories in role-play activities. In Year 6, pupils were able to discuss different ways of finding the perimeter of shapes by working effectively in pairs and small groups. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to organise their own activities and make their own decisions about how they learn because teachers tightly control what pupils do in too many lessons. This reduces pupils' ability to work independently and use their thinking skills, especially in mathematics.

When children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage what they know and what they can do are well below levels typically seen. By the time they enter Year 1, although still below the levels expected for their age, they have made satisfactory progress from their starting points. Attainment at the end of Year 2 in 2011 rose to broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics.

The results of national tests over time show that attainment at the end of Year 6 is consistently low. Too many pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, alongside pupils who speak English as an additional language are

currently not making enough progress from their starting points. This is also a view shared by some parents and carers.

Not enough of the more-able pupils are reaching the higher levels. This is because the work is not consistently challenging and there are too few opportunities in mathematics where pupils can use and apply their skills in practical situations. In addition, opportunities are not always taken to extend pupils' writing skills in a range of different subjects.

Pupils' attainment in reading, while improving securely, remains low by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6. School leaders are developing a strong culture for promoting reading. Pupils enjoy reading and talk about the stories they have read with enthusiasm. Younger pupils are developing their skills to read words by using their knowledge of letters and the sounds they represent.

Quality of teaching

Improvements to the quality of teaching are leading to pupils making better progress than previously, particularly in reading, although achievement remains currently inadequate. Parents and carers have recognised the changes. One parent's view was typical of others. 'Over the last year my child is more confident and happy to learn new things'. More effective teaching is having a positive impact on pupils' good behaviour, their positive attitudes and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Where teaching is strongest teachers are skilled in developing pupils' thinking through effective questioning and challenge. New skills build well on prior learning. Teaching assistants provide an effective layer of extra support for pupils, particularly for those who find learning difficult. The use of success criteria is improving pupils' understanding in lessons. When the planning and teaching are at their very best, the impact on pupils' progress is significant. For example, pupils in Year 6 were developing their ability to improve their descriptions of places by using more descriptive words in sentences. With skilful prompting from the class teacher one pupil was able to write, 'tenderly the tranquil ocean touched the smooth rocks like a feather falling from a bird, flapping its delicate wings'. This lesson confirmed how well the pupils can do when expectations are high and the teaching imaginative.

Where teaching is less effective, teachers direct the learning too tightly which means that pupils are not always engaged sufficiently in their learning. Assessment information is not used well enough by staff to pinpoint exactly what pupils can do and what they need to learn next. This means that tasks for the more-able pupils are not always demanding enough. In addition, there are few opportunities across the planned curriculum for pupils to use their writing skills and apply their mathematical skills in practical situations.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

In line with inspection findings, a large majority of parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire confirm that behaviour is typically good and has improved significantly under the watchful eye of the executive headteacher. They are confident that their children are safe in school. Instances of all kinds of bullying and disruptive behaviour are now rare. This is because of the consistent application of the behaviour management procedures, which are clearly understood and applied by all staff.

Pupils are considerate to each other in lessons and cooperate well in activities. They are respectful of each other's views and develop a strong social conscience. They are proud of their school and are eager to attend. They willingly take on extra responsibilities, such as looking after younger pupils and undertaking jobs and tasks around the school. Pupils who are at the early stages of learning to speak English and who are new to the school are very well cared for and supported. Pupils are supported well in their social and emotional development and are encouraged to talk through their feelings with staff on a regular basis.

Leadership and management

The executive headteacher and the acting headteacher have done sterling work since their appointment to get the school to this point. Over the last year they have worked tirelessly to stabilise the situation and bring about improvements in pupils' learning and in their progress. Their ambition and clear educational direction has had a significant impact on improving the school. With increasingly effective support from middle leaders, including the governing body, they are leading the school down the right path and demonstrate the capacity to sustain improvement. As a result, pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching have improved and staff report that the school is almost unrecognisable from how it was. Much remains to be done to accelerate pupils' progress at Key Stage 2 and to further improve the quality of teaching and learning. However, there is clear evidence to suggest that pupils are beginning to catch up in most year groups and the legacy of underachievement is being tackled effectively. This demonstrates that the school's commitment to equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination is improving. However, the school is not as effective as it should be in improving pupils' life chances and in removing all barriers to learning because pupils are not currently reaching their expected levels by the end of Year 6.

The curriculum adequately meets the needs of pupils. It provides well for the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through a good range of extra-curricular activities and enrichment opportunities including visits to places of interest and links with a school in Zambia. However, it does not provide sufficiently well for the full range of pupils' needs and the development of their independent thinking skills.

The governing body is increasingly confident to act where necessary to support improvements or to question proposals. All procedures and checks for safeguarding pupils' health and well-being are in place and meet statutory requirements.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

| Grade | Judgement | Description |
|---------|--------------|--|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

| Type of school | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
| | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools | 46 | 46 | 8 | 0 |
| Primary schools | 8 | 47 | 40 | 5 |
| Secondary schools | 14 | 38 | 40 | 8 |
| Special schools | 28 | 48 | 20 | 4 |
| Pupil referral units | 15 | 50 | 29 | 5 |
| All schools | 11 | 46 | 38 | 6 |

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement: | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. |
| Behaviour | how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school. |
| Capacity to improve: | the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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: | inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. |
| 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. |
| Safety | how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning. |

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.



2 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gaskell Community Primary School, Bolton, BL1 2QG

Thank you for helping the inspectors when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you in lessons, in the playground and when we listened to some of you read. You expressed your views very clearly and they were very helpful to us.

We looked carefully at your school and found that it should be better. Some of you in Key Stage 2 are not learning as well as you should, given what you could do when you started Year 3. Because of this we have given your school a notice to improve. Another inspector will visit your school in six to eight months to check that it is improving.

You told us that your school is getting better and that your lessons are increasingly interesting and fun. We agree. We could also see how well you behave and how you help one another in class and around the school. I really liked your singing in assembly, particularly the song called 'Rocking all over the World'.

We have asked your headteacher and staff to continue to improve the school by:

- increasing the progress you make in Key Stage 2, particularly in mathematics and writing, so that more of you reach the expected and higher levels
- making sure that more of your lessons are like the very best ones we saw when you were very involved in your learning
- getting your teachers to look more closely at how well you are learning so that they can plan harder work for you.

It was a pleasure to meet you and we can see why your teachers enjoy working with you every day. You can all help your school by continuing to work hard and by letting your teachers know if the work they give you is too easy.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Isherwood
Her Majesty's Inspector

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