

# Washacre Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105199
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bolton
<b>Inspection number</b>	287154
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 September 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Steve Isherwood HMI

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>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	133
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss L Mitchell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 June 2005
<b>School address</b>	Clough Avenue Westhoughton Bolton Lancashire BL5 2NJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01942 813318
<b>Fax number</b>	01942 842465

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized school situated in Westhoughton, on the outskirts of Bolton. The area served by the school is socially and economically disadvantaged. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average, as is the number of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage with a small number from minority ethnic groups. Following its previous inspection in June 2005, the school was removed from special measures.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Washacre is a good school. It is rapidly improving and has made great strides over the last two years in raising the achievement of pupils and in improving the quality of teaching and learning. Parents are hugely supportive and agree wholeheartedly with this view. One parent expressed the views of many when she said, 'The school is now a stimulating and exciting place to be.' Others commented that, 'Since the appointment of the headteacher in 2004, the school has shown a marked improvement in many areas.'

The school has outstanding links with other schools and agencies and has a growing reputation in the local community. Pupils speak highly of their teachers, enjoy coming to school and have an exceptionally strong awareness of how to keep fit and healthy. They behave well, show positive attitudes to their work and get on well with each other. They claim with justification that they are well looked after and feel safe. All pupils are well supported in their personal and emotional development. As a result, they approach their work with confidence, high levels of self-esteem and are not afraid of learning from their mistakes. Through the work of the school council, they make a positive contribution to school life.

Pupils are now making good progress overall, although standards at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 are broadly average. Children start school with knowledge and skills below what is typical for their age. Nonetheless, they achieve well to the beginning of Year 1 and have a good start to their school life. This is because of the good provision in the Foundation Stage where activities are well chosen and clearly focused. Progress in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory because the learning experiences in some lessons are too narrow and do not always build successfully on previous learning styles. Progress picks up in Key Stage 2 and pupils achieve well. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because information on their progress is used well to support their learning and they receive good support in lessons.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with some outstanding features. In the best lessons, activities are challenging and capture the interest and enthusiasm of all learners. Pupils take responsibility to direct their own work and are encouraged to think and discuss their ideas with others. Tasks are well chosen and teachers manage pupils well through praise and encouragement. Skilful questioning develops the learning well. Where teaching is less strong, the range of curriculum experiences are too narrow and at times are not matched consistently to the needs of the pupils.

The headteacher, described by governors as determined and tenacious, has worked hard to steer the school through some difficult times. She provides very good leadership. She has pulled the staff together, received their full support and has galvanised their resolve to act more decisively in the best interests of the pupils. As a consequence, there is clear agreement on what needs to be improved. The areas for improvement identified by the inspection did not come as a surprise and have already formed the basis of school action plans. For example, the school has correctly identified that there is more to do in raising achievement in reading and mathematics at Key Stage 1 and in enhancing the range of learning experiences in the new curriculum. In addition, staff also recognise that at present, checks on the quality of teaching and learning by middle managers lack rigour. The school has good capacity to improve because the agenda for improvement is clear, and staff are forward thinking and reflective.

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and paves the way for children to achieve well. When children enter the Nursery, their skills and understanding are below expectations for children

of that age, particularly in language and communication development. They get off to a good start in a structured and stimulating environment where all learners are valued, cared for and supported extremely well. Relationships are strong. Staff have high expectations, show good teamwork and have a clear understanding of how young children learn best. This ensures that activities are well chosen. Children settle quickly into routines, behave well and enjoy their learning. They treat each other kindly and enjoy taking responsibility. Careful planning of a wide range of interesting and creative activities, coupled with good teaching have led to increased gains in learning. Staff continually assess how well children are achieving and use the information to plan further challenges. As a result, by the start of Year 1, most children are achieving the levels expected of them and have made good progress, particularly in their personal and social development.

Parents are encouraged to become actively involved in their children's learning through parents' clinics and regular contact. As a result, they are kept well informed about how the children are progressing. The school is aware that at present, the outdoor play areas are not as stimulating as those indoors. In addition, there is no covered area to permit outdoor activities when the weather is bad.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and paves the way for children to achieve well. When children enter the Nursery, their skills and understanding are below expectations for children of that age, particularly in language and communication development. They get off to a good start in a structured and stimulating environment where all learners are valued, cared for and supported extremely well. Relationships are strong. Staff have high expectations, show good teamwork and have a clear understanding of how young children learn best. This ensures that activities are well chosen. Children settle quickly into routines, behave well and enjoy their learning. They treat each other kindly and enjoy taking responsibility. Careful planning of a wide range of interesting and creative activities, coupled with good teaching have led to increased gains in learning. Staff continually assess how well children are achieving and use the information to plan further challenges. As a result, by the start of Year 1, most children are achieving the levels expected of them and have made good progress, particularly in their personal and social development.

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

- Ensure that the outside learning environment in the Foundation Stage is as stimulating as the children's indoor areas.
- Accelerate progress at Key Stage 1 in reading and mathematics.
- Enhance curriculum experiences further to stimulate pupils' greater involvement in learning.
- Strengthen the capacity of middle managers to check more rigorously on the quality of teaching and learning.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils' current work, as well as the test results for 2006, shows that, whilst standards are broadly average, the progress pupils make in relation to their capabilities is good overall.

When children start school, many have skills which are below what is typical for their age, particularly in language and communication. The good provision in the Foundation Stage ensures that children settle quickly and achieve well. By the end of the Reception year, many reach the nationally expected levels for their age. This represents good progress given their starting points on entry to the Nursery. Progress in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory. In 2006, standards at the end of Year 2 were in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics and have shown year-on-year improvement since 2004. Although the more able pupils achieved the higher level in writing few did so in reading and mathematics.

Work in lessons and in pupils' books shows that pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make good progress as they move through the school to Year 6. The school's data reveal significant improvements in the last two years. Standards in mathematics and science are above average and in English they are average, as reflected in the most recent validated test results for 2006. A notable success for the school was that in science, all pupils reached the average level and an above average proportion achieved more highly than this. Provisional results for 2007 are encouraging and mirror this upward trend in all subjects.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good and supports their learning well. Pupils display strong attitudes to learning, enjoy coming to school and behave well. Their attendance is satisfactory. Provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. A rich range of experiences develops pupils' understanding of themselves and their place in the wider world. As a result, they are thoughtful, caring and get on well with each other. They have a strong sense of fairness about what is right and wrong and are increasingly confident about making choices and decisions. The buddy system is successful in ensuring that they think carefully about the needs of others and look out for one another.

Pupils have an outstanding awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles. They participate eagerly in a wide range of sport and physical activities. They know about healthy eating through attendance at the healthy eating club and frequently make healthy eating choices at lunchtime and at morning break. Work towards the Healthy Schools Award, together with healthy school weeks and walk-to-school initiatives, confirm the school's strong commitment to pupils' health and well-being. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and are confident that adults will listen sympathetically. This is because teachers are caring and vigilant, relationships are strong and pupils are well supported when they are distressed or unhappy. In particular, vulnerable pupils benefit well from effective counselling and the school's strong commitment to emotional development, nurture and relaxation routines.

The school council is developing well. Pupils are very keen to have their say and make a positive contribution to school life. They become aware of the needs of others and raise funds for several charitable causes.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good, with elements of outstanding practice. As a result, pupils make good progress and achieve well. The best teaching is characterised by well planned, interesting lessons that build well on prior knowledge and engage pupils in lively and stimulating debate. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are skilled in developing pupils' thinking through effective questioning that keeps pupils on their toes. In these lessons, pupils are encouraged to test and deepen their understanding with carefully crafted activities that promote high levels of discussion and independent thinking. Expectations are high, the pace of learning is brisk and as a result, pupils are engrossed in their work. For example, pupils in Year 6 were able to test their understanding of a balanced argument with the use of talking partners and skilfully focused discussion groups. Teaching assistants provide good quality support, enabling all pupils to play a full part in lessons and activities. Effective teamwork ensures that work is well planned for those who need extra support, which ensures their good progress.

Where teaching is less strong, curriculum activities are not as well thought out in relation to the needs of the pupils and new learning does not consistently build upon previous skills. In these lessons, pupils are less engaged and the pace of learning slows. Although there are good examples of teachers' marking, it does not always show pupils exactly how to improve their work.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and has improved well since the time of the last inspection. This is because the staff have worked effectively as a team over the last year to design a new curriculum more relevant to the pupils' needs. In doing so they have sought new and exciting ways to stimulate learning with a strong focus on activities that promote pupils' abilities to investigate, inquire and work independently. Topic themes are well planned, links between subjects are clearly identified and opportunities for pupils to take greater responsibility for their learning are highlighted. The structure of planning has been well thought out over a two-year cycle and the views of pupils in how they like to learn best have been taken into account. Although only in place for two weeks, the new curriculum bodes well for the way in which pupils will learn in the future. At the moment, it is far too early to judge its impact on the progress of pupils but the early signs are encouraging, particularly in those lessons where the teaching is strongest. Senior leaders are well aware of the importance of ensuring that all learning experiences build effectively on what pupils already know and what they need to learn next. At present, this does not always occur in some classes.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

The school takes exceptionally good care of the pupils, who say they feel safe and free from bullying. Careful attention is given to the needs of all pupils and the school provides them with good personal support. For example, the nurture room is very successful in encouraging pupils' social and emotional development and in raising their confidence and self-esteem. Good communication with parents ensures that children settle quickly and are well supported from

the moment they start school. Very strong links with local schools and agencies underpin the good arrangements to support pupils' transition to secondary school.

Pupils' progress is carefully tracked and benefits from the outcomes of regular assessment. Teachers are aware of individual needs, are able to identify pupils who are not making sufficient progress, and take action. Teachers' use of assessment information to plan interesting and challenging lessons is developing well and signals a good improvement since the last inspection.

All required procedures are in place to ensure the safety of pupils in school and on educational visits. For example, the school was successfully evacuated in less than one minute when the fire alarm was triggered accidentally on the second day of the inspection.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides very good leadership and works with energy and determination to push the school forward. Under her clear direction, and with a shared sense of purpose, the school has improved well over the last two years, despite facing significant difficulties caused by falling numbers and high staff turnover. Efforts have been clearly focused on raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching as well as on providing high levels of care and support for individuals. This has promoted pupils' good personal development and their improved progress.

The headteacher is well supported by an equally committed team of staff and governors who share her vision and high expectations. As a result, morale is high, teamwork is strong and staff are open and receptive to new ideas. For example, senior leaders have taken every opportunity to benefit from the strong support of the local authority to get the school back on track. The leadership team, although newly established, is putting the concerns of the past behind it and is not complacent. It has an accurate view of what the school does well and where further improvements are required. For example, the staff have correctly identified the key priorities to build on the significant improvements already achieved. In doing so they recognise that there is more to do to accelerate pupils' achievement at Key Stage 1 and to broaden the range of curriculum experiences further to stimulate pupils' greater involvement in learning. They are also aware that at present, the work of middle managers in checking on the quality of teaching and learning lacks rigour.

The governing body plays an important part in shaping the school's direction. Its members are very committed and provide good levels of support and challenge. As a result, and along with its other strengths, the school has good capacity to improve further.



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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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
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	3
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	1
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	2
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	3
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

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Washacre Primary School, Bolton, BL5 2NJ

As you know, I visited your school recently to find out how well you are learning. I enjoyed my two days with you, and thank you for being so polite and friendly. It was wonderful to see what a happy time you have at school. You made me feel very welcome. I am writing to let you know what I found out.

Firstly, and most importantly, you need to know that your school has improved well and is now a good school. You work hard, behave well and get on well with each other. You feel safe and are very well cared for. You have an excellent understanding of keeping fit and healthy.

I was pleased to see that you are taught well and make good progress in your learning. Your headteacher and all the staff and governors work very hard to make the school as good as it can be and I am sure that it will continue to improve. To help with this, I have asked them to ensure that more of your lessons include opportunities for you to learn in different ways to enable some of you to make even more progress in English and mathematics. I have also asked if they could look more closely at how well you are learning. Finally, for those of you in the Nursery and Reception classes, I have asked your teachers if they could make your outdoor play area more exciting.

You are a credit to your school and to your families. Keep working hard and thank you for helping me with the inspection.