



# St Hilda's CofE Primary School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 105702  
**Local Authority** Oldham  
**Inspection number** 287305  
**Inspection dates** 7–8 March 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Jon Lovgreen

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 address</b>	Tilbury Street
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Oldham
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11		Lancashire OL1 2HJ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 6243592
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	373	<b>Fax number</b>	0161 2871351
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr A Armitage
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Gillian Pursey
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 October 2001		

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

This larger than average school has grown since the last inspection and is oversubscribed. It is close to the town centre, and serves an area of considerable social disadvantage. Pupils are almost entirely from the neighbouring Bangladeshi community and all have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is three times the average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average, though the number with statements of special educational needs is low. The school has gained the national Healthy Schools Award.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Almost all aspects of its work are at least good; many are excellent. There has been considerable progress since the last inspection in terms of what the curriculum provides, the quality of teaching, and improved standards in English and mathematics. The school's detailed self-evaluation, coupled with its considerable ambition, led it to underestimate slightly its overall effectiveness. The school is founded on a very clear understanding of what will benefit pupils. From this, there is a commitment and dedication to do the best for them, shared by all those working in the school. There are no excuses or avoidances: issues are identified and agreed; improvements planned, implemented and carefully checked. This strong sense of direction and urgency stems from the headteacher, who gives excellent leadership, and is respected by all. Staff see her as, 'a fantastic leader who encourages and supports every step of the way.' The school can take pride in the fact that each day staff also live up to the 'Golden Promise' of the commitment to the school's rules and aims which they hope for from pupils. It provides excellent value for money and has outstanding capacity to improve.

The school's appreciation of the needs and beliefs of local families is also a key strength. The school has been a central factor in creating and sustaining community cohesion, and in preparing pupils for life in the multi-faith and multi-cultural Britain beyond their immediate community. There are excellent partnerships with other schools and community groups which help to widen pupils' horizons and ambitions. Efforts to make links with parents and get their views have been extensive and successful. They have great confidence in the school, but many are reluctant to take their part in working with the school to help their children's progress. They do, however, appreciate the regular lessons in English and computing which the school offers to families.

Standards on entry, especially in language, are low, but pupils make consistently good progress. In the Foundation Stage, they quickly learn to improve their spoken language and work together. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, pupils reach standards which are just below the national average. Progress in English is outstanding. Science results continue to lag behind others. This is because pupils do not get enough opportunity to plan and prepare their own investigations and both teachers and pupils are less confident about using specialist terms in science than they are in other subjects. Because of the excellent care and guidance they get, pupils become confident and diligent workers, and enthusiastic about school and proud of their part in it. The curriculum is outstanding, with much improved provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and humanities, both criticised in the last report. Very good use is made of small class sizes in Reception, and sets in English and mathematics, to accelerate learning. Teaching and learning are good. For many pupils, 'Lessons are fun and teachers really help you,' but some pupils are not yet learning to question or delve into ideas enough and try things for themselves.

New appointments of key stage leaders have stimulated thinking about the curriculum and improved the continuity of pupils' learning. The quality of middle management is good. Since the last inspection, the responsibilities of subject coordinators have

been successfully extended. Their monitoring of work in subject areas is already having a significant impact. Management of the Foundation Stage is good. There are good plans to make the best use of the new building and comprehensive methods of assessing pupils' progress. The governing body is now effective; it is ably led and beginning to appreciate its role in helping the school develop further.

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

- Raise standards in science by the end of Year 6.
- Teach pupils to become more independent as learners, and more confident to test ideas out or try things for themselves.
- Ensure that the school's considerable efforts to engage the community result in parents and governors having a stronger influence on pupils' progress.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils join the school with very weak literacy skills, especially the spoken language so essential to early education. They get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage, making especially good progress in their social, physical and creative skills because of the good range of well planned activities provided for them. From Year 1 upwards, progress is consistently good, so that pupils reach standards just below the national average by the end of both key stages. This is a considerable improvement from the last inspection. Results have been rising at a higher rate than the national picture. Pupils make outstanding progress in English because of the high priority given to phonics, and the stress on neat, accurate written work. As a result, in 2006, pupils reached average standards in writing by the end of Year 2. After rising steadily, results in the end of Year 6 tests fell in 2006 because pupils did less well in mathematics and, especially, science. However, from their standards at the end of Year 2, the overall progress of this group of pupils was good, the slower progress of lower attaining boys being balanced by that of higher attaining girls. Lesson observation shows that achievement in English is still outstanding, and achievement in mathematics and science is improving. Boys tend to do less well because some are less motivated, or too dependent on adults for ideas and direction. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress, though again some rely too much on the good help they get from adults.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is strong. The emphasis on social and moral development leads to the good behaviour and excellent attitudes which help schooling. Moral education is further developed by circle time, where pupils learn to be considerate and thoughtful. The youngest pupils settle in well because of good transition and partnership arrangements. Many lack the necessary understanding of language to follow detailed instructions but they behave well and soon learn to

listen carefully and talk confidently. Attendance is good and pupils enjoy school. They are polite, helpful and enthusiastic. Members of the Junior Leadership Team (school council) are confidently articulate and make an outstanding contribution. Pupils take on responsibilities as monitors at various times. The school's personal and social education provision is excellent in developing pupils' self-awareness and tolerance of others' views. The 'Golden Promise' scheme is enthusiastically embraced by pupils who are proud to wear the badge of honour to show their commitment to school rules and aims. Pupils appreciate keenly how to stay safe and show an excellent understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. The drive for healthy living is enhanced by pupils analysing their own opinions and challenging those of others. Restrictions on sweets in school and a ban on chewing gum and crisps have been instigated by pupils.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils settle quickly to work and respond well to teachers' expectations of neat and accurate written work. Lessons are well planned and ICT is used to good effect. Pupils learn both to concentrate on and manipulate the interactive whiteboards so that learning is brought to life. Teachers generally vary styles and tasks so that time is well used and pupils' concentration stimulated. They usually explain tasks to pupils clearly and most use questions carefully. However, when explanations are overlong, there is less time for independent learning activities. When questions are not searching enough, pupils are not able to try and test out new ideas. 'Brain gym' is a feature of many lessons and it combines with good resources and classroom displays to keep children interested and enthusiastic. Assessment is used very effectively to identify what pupils need to learn next, and marking is both regular and good in the advice it gives. However, not all pupils are skilled in how to tell the teacher what help they need. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress. Classroom assistants know how to support individual pupils and they work well with teachers to help pupils do their best. At times, they do not sufficiently encourage pupils to try things out for themselves.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is creative and flexible, responsive to community needs and is being developed continually. Issues from the last inspection have been well tackled. Provision for ICT is now good and there is improved outdoor provision for the youngest pupils. The Foundation Stage curriculum is good: stimulating experiences help pupils to learn and settle into school. The grouping of older pupils by ability for English and mathematics is highly effective. Pupils get many chances to widen their learning through visits and outside visitors. Themed weeks give an excitement to learning. A 'Health and Fitness' week, involving parents and visitors, combined healthy lifestyles and fun. The many lunchtime and after school clubs help pupils develop skills,

confidence and responsibility. Well established links with local schools and partners in the community prepare pupils to be good citizens. For example, a community project based on dance and drama helped pupils develop an excellent understanding of cultural differences, and how to respect people who are different or have different beliefs. The school is aware of the need to provide more investigative work in science and is beginning to do so.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Care, support and guidance are outstanding. The exceptionally high commitment of all staff has a marked effect on pupils' personal development. Pupils are known and cherished. There are excellent procedures for protecting pupils, and all risk assessments and child protection requirements are in place. Thorough and sensitive systems help pupils new to the school to quickly feel at home, and older pupils to feel confident about the move to secondary school.

Pupils' progress is accurately assessed on a regular basis and their progress towards targets is checked so that underachievement is quickly spotted. This has led to changes to the science curriculum for older pupils. Children know their targets and they know how to improve their work. The excellent support of a learning mentor promotes the trust of children and parents and is having a significant impact on progress. This appointment is just one example of the school's widespread and determined efforts to engage with its community and to remain at the heart of it.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The range of improvements since the last inspection evidences the high quality of leadership and management. There is a totally clear direction for the school and this vision is coupled with precise, planned and measurable steps. Teachers and all other staff feel thoroughly informed about, and highly involved in, school development. As a result, they are clear about their roles and responsibilities and keen to perform them well. This stems from the headteacher's outstanding leadership. Supported in recent months by an energetic and innovative deputy headteacher, she has worked hard to create an atmosphere where all feel valued, but expectations remain high. Ambition for success is balanced with high quality care, and a concern that pupil's individual personalities should also flourish. Monitoring is excellent; it is regular, thorough and sharply focused on what will help standards rise and pupils' progress improve. Middle managers are central to this work and are diligent and enthusiastic about it. The governing body, previously unsatisfactory, now meets regularly. It is effective and benefits from the good leadership which is beginning to help it to steer, as well as support, the school. As a result of all these factors, the school provides excellent value for money and has outstanding capacity to improve.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<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.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

As you know, we recently visited your school to see how well you are doing, and if the school is giving you the education you deserve. This letter is to tell you what we found.

We think your school is excellent because almost everything about it is at least good, and many things are outstanding. Thank you for welcoming us into your school in such a smiling, polite and helpful way. You helped us a great deal and certainly lived up to your 'Golden Promise'. You told us how much you love school and this was clear from your good behaviour and the excellent way you work in lessons. You respect your teachers and follow instructions in lessons carefully, but you also need to come up with more answers and ideas of your own. You appreciate the range of subjects you are taught and the school's way of finding new and imaginative ways of helping you to learn through visits, visitors, projects and themed weeks. You could benefit by getting involved in more of the clubs and activities which the school provides outside of lessons. The headteacher and senior managers have an excellent understanding of what is best for you and the school, and have detailed plans to bring about improvements.

We have asked the teachers and governors to further improve your school by:

- helping you to do better in science by teaching you how to plan and prepare experiments yourselves, and use scientific terms correctly
- making you rely less on teachers and assistants for ideas and answers, so that you learn to be confident in explaining your own ideas
- continuing with the great efforts made to get your parents and families to be more involved in school life to help your progress in school.

You can help by continuing to work hard and looking after each other, and by supporting the hard work done for you by all the adults in the school by getting as involved as you can in everything they offer.