

Gorse Hall Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106188
Local Authority	Tameside
Inspection number	309047
Inspection dates	9–10 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Gill Jones HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	454
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr G Goodchild
Headteacher	Mr D Harrison
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2004
School address	Forester Drive Stalybridge Cheshire SK15 2DP
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school, situated near to the centre of the former mill town of Stalybridge in Tameside. Most children who attend the school live in the immediate locality, which although mixed is generally socially and economically disadvantaged.

The children are mainly of White British heritage. A small proportion are from minority ethnic backgrounds: these children all speak English fluently. The number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities is below the national average and a very small proportion of these have a statement of special educational needs.

The school holds a number of awards which include the ECO schools award and the Activemark Gold.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Gorse Hall Primary and Nursery School is a good school. The headteacher has maintained the positive ethos that was praised highly at the time of the last inspection. Parents appreciate the headteacher's high expectations for their children's achievement and his caring attitude. The quality of pastoral care the school provides is outstanding. Children make good progress in their learning and in their personal development. Their behaviour is excellent. Children enjoy their lessons and the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities the school provides. They are very proud of their school.

Children start the Nursery with knowledge and skills generally below the levels expected for 3 year olds. They have a good start in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) and by the time they enter Key Stage 1, most are well prepared to start the National Curriculum. Children progress well in Key Stages 1 and 2, reaching standards in mathematics and science well above those expected for 11 year olds. The standards reached in English are average, which means that most children meet the standards expected nationally at Year 6. Overall, children's achievement is good.

The quality of teaching and the curriculum are good. Teaching seen during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. Lessons are well planned and interesting. Teachers and teaching assistants are highly skilled at capturing the children's attention. Relationships are good and children work well together, showing each other respect by listening to their different view points during discussions. In a few lessons, children are all set the same work and the higher ability children in particular are not sufficiently challenged. Occasionally, children do not know what to do to improve because marking and the setting of targets does not provide this information. The curriculum is well matched to children's interests and abilities. It is broad and balanced and makes good use of the resources in the locality. In Key Stage 1, the recent introduction of a new approach to phonics is leading to improved progress in children's early reading and writing skills.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work effectively together to set the excellent ethos for the school. Suitable priorities for improvement have been identified and governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, the outcomes of the school's development work are not evaluated sufficiently rigorously. Issues raised at the last inspection have been dealt with effectively. The school provides good value for money and has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Nursery with skills and abilities below those generally expected for 3 year olds. They make good progress across all areas of learning in the Nursery and Reception classes and by the time they enter Year 1, most have reached the levels that are expected for 5 year olds.

Children settle quickly in the Nursery, skilfully supported by a very caring staff and a well planned induction programme. They develop positive attitudes to learning and quickly gain independence and good social skills. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is well planned to capture the children's interest. Good use is made of the locality to develop children's

communication skills. For example, following a visit to the local shops, a hairdressing salon was set up in the classroom and children practised their writing by making appointments. Teaching is good. Children confidently use all the resources available to them in all the areas of learning. They enjoy school. The opportunity to learn outdoors is limited for Reception children as currently there is no secure outdoor area available except the playground used by all children. The school has plans to improve the facilities for outdoor learning.

Parents appreciate the effort the school makes to involve them in helping their children to learn. For example, they value the high quality journals provided for each child to take home to keep parents informed about what their children have been learning. Staff check children's progress regularly, weaker areas of learning are identified and appropriate support is given. The Foundation Stage is led and managed well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English to match those in mathematics and science, especially for the more able children.
- Improve target setting and marking to ensure that children know exactly how to improve their work.
- Evaluate the outcomes of the school's work more effectively and use lessons learned to better inform future development plans.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children achieve well and standards are well above average in mathematics and science at the end of Year 6. Standards in English are broadly in line with the levels expected nationally for 11 year olds.

Children enter Year 1 well prepared to start the National Curriculum. Most have reached the levels expected nationally for 5 year olds. Children currently in Key Stage 1 are making good progress. Standards at Key Stage 1 are in line with the national average. They have fallen slightly since the last inspection, but the school has successfully identified the reasons for this and dealt with them effectively.

Since the last inspection, standards at Key Stage 2 have been consistently well above the national average in mathematics and science. They are lower in English, but remain in line with the national average. The school meets its challenging targets in mathematics and science, resulting in good achievement. However, in English, some of the more able children have not reached the highest level in the national tests. The school has identified this as an area for improvement. Children currently in Key Stage 2 are making good progress. Vulnerable children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as the others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Their behaviour is outstanding; they are well mannered and considerate to each other. Children are very aware of what constitutes good and poor behaviour. They feel safe and secure in school. Children know how to keep fit and healthy. They appreciate the sporting opportunities the school offers. Children have a good understanding of healthy eating, which was demonstrated to inspectors during school lunch, as some children debated

why potatoes cannot be counted as part of '5-a-day'. Children enjoy school. They have excellent attitudes to learning and listen well to each other when they work in pairs or in small groups. Children enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular clubs the school offers; for example, they are proud of their work from art club which is effectively displayed in the entrance hall. Children are committed to improving their environment and the ECO committee was awarded the Green Flag in 2007 as a measure of their achievement.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It ranges from satisfactory to outstanding and these judgements match the school's own evaluation.

A typical lesson at Gorse Hall is interesting and full of activity. Teaching is lively and engaging. Children are given clear expectations of what they are to learn. Relationships are good. Teachers make good use of resources they have, including the electronic whiteboards provided in each classroom. Activities are well planned to match the children's needs and abilities. Teaching assistants are valued members of the team and play a significant part in teaching and learning. Specialist teachers and coaches are effective in sharing their additional expertise. In the very best lessons, children are enthralled by the activities and totally absorbed in their work.

Most lessons are of good quality. However, where teaching is weaker, it is generally because the introduction of the lesson is too long so children lose focus, and all children are set the same task. Teachers' expectations for children of higher ability are sometimes not high enough and they do not always set work that has a sufficient level of challenge.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provided by the school is good. It meets statutory requirements, is broad and balanced and offers the opportunity to learn modern foreign languages. There is a suitable emphasis on the provision of key skills in mathematics, reading, writing and information and communication technology (ICT), which has recently been enhanced by the introduction of the new 'letters and sounds' programme in Key Stage 1 and 'The Big Write' in Key Stage 2. The key skills are taught through other subjects, which helps children to make sense of their learning. Good use is made of the local environment which captures the children's interest and imagination well. An appropriate range of visits and visitors to school enriches the children's experience; for example, children particularly enjoyed the recent Viking Day. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities and this includes some specialist provision for gifted and talented children.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a very caring school, providing outstanding levels of pastoral support. All the required procedures to safeguard children and to ensure their health and safety are in place. The school works effectively with partner schools and local children's agencies to ensure care for its most vulnerable children is of high quality. Parents appreciate the approachability of staff; they say concerns are dealt with effectively. The school has high expectations for behaviour and has an

excellent code of conduct. Time is given to the acquisition of life skills and social issues in lessons, and children discuss relevant issues such as bullying and racism.

The guidance given in lessons varies considerably. There is some outstanding practice from which staff can learn. The best practice makes effective use of learning targets; children use them as prompts and reminders and they are relevant to their needs and abilities. Marking is helpful and points children to what they need to do next to improve their work. Where guidance is weaker, targets are not relevant to children's needs and marking is simply celebratory without guiding children to what they need to learn next. The school tracks the progress of all children; however, information is not yet used effectively to identify underachievement at a very early stage.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. Since the last inspection, the headteacher has maintained the school's excellent ethos, based on high expectations for children's personal development and achievement. The headteacher says, 'It's not only what you do, it's what you are', and his caring, considerate approach to relationships is evident throughout the school.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have built a strong staff team. They deploy staff well and have identified relevant priorities for school improvement. They set consistently challenging targets for children's achievement which are generally met. The recent decision to give a stronger management role to the deputy headteacher is leading to a greater consistency in classroom practice and a better quality evidence base from which to evaluate the success of the school improvement plan.

Middle leadership is developing well. Subject leaders have a good knowledge of their subjects and are confident in leading staff meetings and providing training for the staff. However, they do not yet fully evaluate the performance information available to them to check whether their work is improving the progress of children across the school.

Governors are very involved in the work and development of the school and provide good support. They challenge the school constructively. The time is now right for them to evaluate more closely the impact of school improvement initiatives on the outcomes for children.

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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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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	1
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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	3
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**

You may remember that Mrs Davenport, Mrs Tarry and I visited your school a short while ago to carry out an inspection. Thank you for welcoming us and for sharing your views about your school. We listened very carefully to your opinions and this letter is to explain what we found.

We judged your school to be good. Your parents told us that Mr Harrison is a very caring headteacher and that the school is a happy place for you to learn. We agree. You are taught well and most of you make good progress in your work. The curriculum is good; lessons are interesting and you particularly enjoy the special theme days. The younger children love learning their letters and sounds and enjoy playing 'guess the sound' games - even at lunch time. You are keen to take part in the clubs your school provides; we thought the street dancing looked great fun.

Your behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding. You have excellent attitudes to learning. We were impressed by how well you work together and listen to each other's point of view. You are confident the adults in school will help if you have a problem, but you say it rarely happens because you make good friends. You know about healthy lifestyles and like the sporting activities, though some of you admitted that you find it difficult to eat five portions of fruit or vegetables every day.

Mr Harrison has good plans to improve the school. He believes that you can make better progress in English and we agree. To do this, your teachers will make sure that your learning targets and their marking shows you exactly how to improve your work. Mr Harrison will check that the school's plans for improvement are resulting in you making better progress. Your challenge is to always aim to do your very best work and to keep up your excellent behaviour!

I enjoyed my visit to your school. Thank you to those of you who sat with me at lunchtime, in particular for your interesting conversations. You all have my good wishes for the future.