

# The Valley Community Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	133980
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bolton
<b>Inspection number</b>	316228
<b>Inspection date</b>	26 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joe Peacock

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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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 (total)	515
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Jim Sherrington
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Gwen Acton OBE
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 June 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Hibbert Street Off Blackburn Road Bolton BL1 8JG

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection date</b>	26 November 2008
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**Telephone number**  
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the progress made by children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS); the school's strategies to raise standards in Key Stage 1 and for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; how effectively staff are using computers to enhance the quality of teaching and learning; and procedures to monitor and evaluate the school's effectiveness. Evidence was gathered from the school's own self-evaluation; published national assessment data and the school's own assessment records, policies and minutes; observation of the school at work; interviews with members of staff, pupils and governors; and analysis of parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest the school's own assessments as given in its self-evaluation were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

## Description of the school

This inner city school is much larger than average and does not have the space to accommodate all those who apply for admission. Almost all pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds (99.4%). Pupils of Indian origin account for 80% of pupils and all are of the Muslim faith. A small but growing number are from Eastern European countries. The percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language is very high (96%). The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is through a Nursery unit and two Reception classes. The headteacher has been honoured with the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to education.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

The headteacher's inspirational leadership has ensured that the school has continued to go from strength to strength and has an excellent capacity to go on improving. The school is outstanding in almost every respect and enjoys an enviable reputation in the local community and beyond. It is oversubscribed each year. 'Teamwork. Together we achieve the extraordinary' is an apt motto adopted by the school along with 'Everybody matters' and 'Together, we're better'. Staff are at one to promote family values of trust and respect, and give the children in their care high aspirations and dreams for the future.

It is now five years since the school opened in its impressive new building, following the amalgamation of two schools. Much has been achieved. The school has 'wow factors' in abundance according to pupils who say, 'Every day something good is happening and it's great fun'. Attendance is above average and this along with pupils' happy, smiling faces and outstanding behaviour reflects their enjoyment of school. They are extremely proud of 'our' school. Entering to the sound of bird songs through the 'green valley' entrance hall with its landscape painted walls, running water features, coloured lights and sculptures has a calming effect and inspires an extraordinary sense of awe and wonder in pupils.

The excellent start that most children have in the EYFS is a credit to the expertise of the Nursery and Reception staff. Despite making excellent progress, most enter Year 1 with skills that are below average. By the end of Year 2, standards in reading and mathematics are average but below average in writing. Improving pupils' writing skills has had a strong focus since the previous inspection but despite the wide range of strategies the school has introduced, pupils' performance in writing still lags behind the improvement made in other subjects. No pupil attained above average standards in the latest national assessments, for example. By Year 6, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. This represents outstanding achievement for most pupils from their starting points. The school purposefully sets its targets at the highest level in the range for each subject and usually succeeds in meeting those targets. Excellent support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those with a special talent. It is managed superbly by three special needs coordinators. Their collective efforts are keeping the number on the special needs register below average and are ensuring that these pupils make the same outstanding progress as others. Starting in the Nursery, teachers and support staff ensure that all pupils who speak English as an additional language have the help they need to succeed.

'Every culture and every person matters here' was a typical comment from pupils. Pupils relish their responsibilities in roles such as 'flying mediators' who help pupils to patch up quarrels, 'food officers' who help in the dining hall and 'communications officers' who answer telephones or welcome visitors. Pupils have written their own job descriptions for these roles, which is another source of pride. Pride, responsibility and friendship all contribute to pupils' self-esteem and sense of belonging, fostering strong bonds in the school and wider community. The long and impressive list of awards gained by the school, such as Investors in People, an Advanced Healthy Schools Award and European Foundation Quality Assessment Mark (EFQM), add significantly to pupils' outstanding personal development and community involvement.

The high quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum successfully motivate pupils and very effectively meet their needs. All staff use the abundant number of computers most effectively to enhance pupils' learning and make their lessons interesting. Teachers are supported very

well by the skilled support assistants, many of whom are bilingual, and parent volunteers. Pupils have an excellent attitude to learning. A detailed assessment three times each year ensures that teachers know which pupils need that little extra support to meet their learning targets. This ensures that all continue to make the progress expected of them. The vibrant and attractive displays celebrate pupils' achievements in different subjects and reflect the enjoyable and exciting curriculum on offer. Pupils especially enjoy after-school clubs such as tap dancing, crazy craft and Islamic art. There is even a friendship club.

Parents' responses to the inspection questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive. They appreciate the exceptionally high quality of care, support and guidance and the strong impact it has on their children's personal development and their attitudes towards school. All safeguarding procedures are in place.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Staff and governors make a formidable team dedicated to continuous improvement. All affectionately regard the headteacher as their 'rock of knowledge' and all share pupils' pride in the school. Together they have developed a cohesive community with a unique blend of warmth and high expectations. Governance is outstanding as the governing body is an integral part of all the school's rigorous monitoring procedures, helping to evaluate school effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. The chair of governors is deeply committed to the school he helped to create the funding for and is building up his list of words beginning with E to describe the school. Exceptional and effervescent are the latest accurate additions.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

The EYFS makes outstanding provision for children to learn and develop new skills. Throughout, they are exceptionally well cared for and their welfare is promoted outstandingly well.

Procedures for introducing children to Nursery and the transfer to Reception are excellent. The involvement of parents is seen by the school as crucial. Parents appreciate the warm welcome they are given. Many are active in helping their children to learn at the start of sessions through their involvement in 'Stay and Play', and 'Stay and Learn' activities. Children settle into the Nursery and Reception very quickly and this ensures that learning begins promptly.

Children enter the Nursery with skills much lower than those normally expected for their age. Many do not speak English, and all forms of communication in the language are low. They make rapid progress throughout the EYFS because of the excellent quality of teaching and the wide range of exciting activities planned for them. An absolute focus on linking sounds and letters ensures that all children make at least good progress, and many make better than this, in their acquisition of English, and in their ability to speak, read and understand. There is a very good balance between learning activities led by adults, and those children choose for themselves. A stimulating range of outdoor resources, which children enjoy, greatly enhances their personal and language development and successfully promotes learning in all areas of the curriculum.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The knowledgeable and dedicated staff have been moulded into a very effective team by the EYFS leader. They constantly check children's progress and this gives them a detailed understanding of individual children's needs which they can then plan effectively to meet.

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

- Raise standards in writing by the end of Year 2.

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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?	1
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	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.



## Personal development and well-being

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

## The quality of provision

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

## 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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	1
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**

Thank you for your warm welcome and for showing us so many smiling, happy faces when we came to inspect your school. We were very impressed by your excellent behaviour and with all of the different officers such as the 'flying mediators' and those responsible for music, dining room duties and looking after visitors. Well done all of you.

So, we are delighted to be able to tell you officially something that you already know and told us. Your school is outstanding! We can see why you are so proud of it and why all those who care for you at home are so pleased with it too.

In the Nursery unit and Reception classes (EYFS), we enjoyed watching you working on computers like busy little beavers, counting blocks as you built tall towers and having fun outdoors in the rain.

It was amazing to see all of you in Years 1 to 6 getting on so happily together, working so hard in class and doing so well. All of you who are learning to speak English are doing brilliantly thanks to the fantastic support you have in lessons and all the extra help out of the class. We have asked your teachers to concentrate even more on helping everybody in Years 1 and 2 to improve their writing skills.

It was a real pleasure to meet your headteacher, all your teachers and their helpers. They are doing a great job planning such interesting and exciting things for you to do. We hope you will continue to work as hard as you are, be just as friendly and carry on enjoying every minute in your wonderful school.

Thank you again for making our visit to your school such a memorable one.