

# Gaskell Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105155
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bolton
<b>Inspection number</b>	324169
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 September 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Steve Rigby

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)	307
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>	Rev P Hinchcliffe
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Alison Nightingale
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 October 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>	Thomas Holden Street Bolton Lancashire BL1 2QG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01204 333666
<b>Fax number</b>	01204 333667

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This above average size school with Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision, serves a very diverse community that experiences significant amounts of social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than normally found. About two thirds of pupils are from diverse backgrounds with by far the largest group of pupils from a Pakistani heritage. The school is currently experiencing a major rebuilding programme.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Gaskell Primary School is a school working in very challenging circumstances. It succeeds in providing pupils with a satisfactory education. Since the last inspection the school has experienced a fall in standards due to a high turnover of teaching staff and an influx of pupils into some year groups at short notice. Many of these pupils have limited prior experience of school. This creates significant demands on teaching.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher has a clear vision for improvement shared with all senior leaders. There are strong links with governors and the local authority (LA) and together they provide guidance and support to staff. This enables staff to work to the best of their capabilities and meet the needs of pupils. A small number of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire expressed concern about past staff turnover and staff morale. The inspectors judge that morale and teamwork is positive and staff are enthusiastic and feel that their efforts are valued and having a beneficial impact on standards.

Children start school with skills that are well below those nationally, with particular weaknesses in literacy. The rate of pupils' progress varies. In the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 children make good progress in all areas of the curriculum. The most recent test results show that pupils' standards in mathematics by Year 2 are broadly in line with national figures. However, standards in reading and writing remain below average due to the difficulties many pupils experience in mastering the basic skills of literacy. Pupil's progress slows through Key Stage 2 partially due to the varying quality of teaching and learning. This results in pupils' level of attainment by the end of Year 6 being significantly below that usually found nationally in English, mathematics and science. However, pupils who have attended the school for a whole key stage reach standards that are significantly higher than pupils who arrive at other times with little or no English and who initially experience difficulty in accessing the curriculum.

The quality of teaching and learning overall is satisfactory although variable. This means that pupils learn at an uneven pace. The school increasingly uses accurate and reliable assessment and this is key in addressing the inconsistencies in teaching and learning and the quality of lesson planning. In the best lessons teachers set realistic and relevant targets for pupils recognising the range of abilities in their classes. However, in the weaker lessons there is a lack of pace with too much passive learning taking place.

There are a number of strong features in the school, particularly the pastoral care and support that underpins pupils' personal development. The overwhelming majority of parents appreciate the school's work, one parent commenting, 'We received a warm welcome and we were impressed by the way the school embraced diversity.' This inclusive approach to all pupils' needs produces a positive sense of community and an ethos of care and respect. Pupils are well mannered and polite and say that they enjoy school and feel safe despite the building work going on all around them. 'We like the visits, the music and the... Oh yes! the dinners.' They enjoy their work on healthy lifestyles and are preparing to be assessed for the Healthy Schools Award. A wide range of extra-curricular visits and activities such as sports, baking and the Stained Glass Window Club are well attended and hugely enjoyed.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The school takes great care to meet all requirements for child protection and the safeguarding of pupils. The school works closely with a number of partners to ensure that vulnerable pupils are well provided for. However, the guiding of pupils

towards their individual targets in literacy and numeracy is inconsistent. Marking is generally positive but there is some variation in the extent to which pupils are given clear ideas about how to improve.

Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. Successful training for staff in behaviour management has resulted in a significant fall in exclusions. Attendance remains well below average despite the efforts of the school and the LA, both of which emphasise the importance to parents of regular attendance and punctuality. The school's staff share a common purpose and vision to improve rates of achievement and have a satisfactory capacity to move forward. Since the last inspection the role of the governing body has developed. Governors have a satisfactory awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses and provide an appropriate level of challenge and support.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Children get off to a good start in the EYFS. They enter the Nursery with skills that are well below those typical for their age. Children receive a warm welcome into the secure, friendly Nursery and Reception classes and soon begin to explore and investigate the activities provided for them. Good teaching and a well planned stimulating range of practical activities really capture children's interest and develop their skills quickly so that they achieve well in all areas of learning. However, the outdoor area does not provide enough opportunities for extending children's learning experiences throughout the day. The staff work as an effective team with a good knowledge of the children and their families and the learning and pastoral needs of children. This results in children making good progress, builds early home/school links and involves parents in their children's education. Staff take every opportunity to increase the children's vocabulary and language skills in all activities. Children's personal, social and emotional development is promoted well. Relationships are very good, children work and play happily together and enjoy their learning. As a result, children quickly gain in confidence and independence. Leadership and management of the EYFS are good. Progress is assessed regularly and planned activities take into account children's individual needs. When they enter Year 1 pupils' skills are just below those expected for their age.

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

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science throughout the school.
- Ensure that teaching and learning within the school is of a consistently high quality at all times.
- Improve levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Provide rigorous academic guidance for all pupils.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, although standards by Year 6 remain significantly below average. However, the school's most recent provisional results in the national tests show that by Year 2 pupils are making good progress. Standards in mathematics are broadly similar to those expected nationally with the most able pupils achieving well in reading and writing.

However, overall standards remain below national figures due to the difficulties some pupils have in mastering the basic skills of literacy. By Year 6 the rate of pupils' progress has slowed, resulting in significantly low standards in mathematics, English and science. This is mainly due to the disruption and the lack of consistently good teaching and learning these pupils have experienced. In addition, overall attainment figures are lower due to the number of international pupils who have little or no English on arrival and who initially experience difficulty in accessing their learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from the support they receive in small groups and make progress similar to other pupils. Those pupils who are learning English as an additional language make similar progress to others and often make good progress in acquiring new vocabulary. This is due to the number of pupils working in small groups and involved in individual and group literacy programmes, delivered by specialist staff, to support their learning.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being is a strength of the school. The majority of pupils enjoy school and, in particular, are enthusiastic about 'Golden Time' – a time when pupils choose their tasks. In the classrooms and on playgrounds pupils' behaviour is generally satisfactory but in lessons that lack pace some pupils became disruptive and challenging. Staff handle these situations sensitively and have been instrumental in reducing the number of exclusions. Pupils like the school dinners and healthy options available and the visits to places of interest. Pupils are polite, well mannered and generally show respect for each other and the adults who care for them. In good lessons pupils showed positive attitudes, relationships are strong and pupils are keen to learn and work well together. Attendance is well below the national average – a decline since 2007. Despite the efforts of the school and the LA a small number of families resist their children's regular attendance. Pupils understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and the value of exercise. They have a clear say in the school through the well established school council: for example, in designing part of the school. Pupils' economic well-being is satisfactory and developed through basic skills and interesting opportunities such as business enterprise weeks and careers education. Pupils' moral, social and cultural education is good. This is a diverse but harmonious community where all cultures are respected.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Although the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, it is not yet consistently strong enough to ensure that pupils make good progress during their time at the school. However, information from the tracking of pupils' progress is now being used more accurately to plan for the needs of all pupils. In lessons where teaching is good, effective planning means that pupils are clear about what they are about to learn. Teachers' questioning challenges their thinking and the pace is brisk. In addition, teachers are more consistent in setting tasks of varying difficulty to meet the different needs of pupils. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning and make good progress. Where the impact of teaching on learning is weaker behaviour is not always managed well enough; teachers talk for too long and some activities lack sufficient challenge or fail to match pupils' needs. A skilled group of teaching assistants provide good support for all pupils and, in particular, for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The school provides a satisfactory and fully inclusive curriculum. The school aims to raise the low standards in English, mathematics and science. Curricular resources are satisfactory and well deployed to help pupils learn. There are a number of extra-curricular activities available and the children are provided with a range of visits throughout the year to support their studies. This includes a residential visit to Burrs Outdoor Education Centre for the older pupils which promotes their social and physical skills. All older pupils have the opportunity to learn a brass instrument, which provides them with an opportunity to perform and represent the school at a number of musical events. Modern foreign languages are taught to the older pupils and include German, French and Spanish. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have full access to the same range of opportunities as their classmates, creating a school ethos that values all pupils' contributions.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The provision of a good level of care and support is at the heart of the school's work and ensures that pupils develop positive attitudes. The school takes great care to ensure pupils' safety and well-being. The procedures for ensuring pupils' safety are fully up to date. Staff work closely with a number of partners to ensure that all vulnerable pupils are given the support they need. Academic guidance is satisfactory. The school is developing a range of tracking and target-setting for individuals and groups. However, these systems are new and have yet to become established. Marking is generally positive, although there is some variation in the extent to which pupils are given clear ideas about how to improve.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher has provided satisfactory leadership through a period when the school has changed in character and there has been significant disruption to teaching and, consequently, to pupils' rate of learning. Teamwork is developing. All the senior leaders play a full part in how the school is managed. Working closely with the LA the school has identified its strengths and weaknesses. There is developing use of performance data to identify which pupils need extra support. However, arrangements to monitor pupils' progress and set targets for improvement have yet to become fully embedded. Regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning are not yet sufficiently focused on the progress that pupils make in lessons. As a result, pupils' learning is uneven. The school is successful in promoting racial harmony and understanding between pupils. Links to the wider community are satisfactory; for example links with a local school show how both communities can celebrate their diversity. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities.

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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?	3
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

<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>	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	3
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	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for welcoming the inspectors when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and listening to how you felt about your school. We judge that Gaskell Primary School is satisfactory and getting better. It was pleasing to see the progress most of you make in lessons, how much you enjoy school, and that you feel safe and happy there. You told us about healthy lifestyles and the enjoyment some of you experience from music.

We saw that the teaching and your learning varied in places and we have asked the school to make sure that all teaching is as good as it can be so that you learn at a good rate. It is very important that you keep working hard to improve your English, mathematics and science. We have asked the school to give you really good help in this. It is also important that you and your families understand that you need to attend school every day and to be on time so that you do not miss out on what the school provides for you.