

St Michael and All Angels CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107570
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	377605
Inspection dates	22–23 February 2012
Lead inspector	Susan Walsh

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	C Rushworth
Headteacher	Judith Hamlin
Date of previous school inspection	2 December 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Susan Walsh
Jeremy Barnes

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 18 lessons led by eight of the school's teachers. Meetings were held with staff as well as with members of the governing body and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work. They also looked at development plans, records of pupils' progress and arrangements for safeguarding as well as other documents. They scrutinised 65 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, and questionnaires from pupils and staff. Responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) were also taken into account.

Information about the school

The school is slightly smaller than average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is low. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is generally below average, although this can vary considerably from year to year. An average proportion has a statement of special educational need. The school meets the current government floor standard.

The school established and manages 'The Angels' before- and after-school club. The pre-school provision is run and managed by a parents' and carers' committee and is not included in this inspection report.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school which has improved considerably in recent years. Pupils make good progress from their individual starting points and their attainment is above average by the time they leave Year 6. This represents good achievement. Inconsistencies in teaching and leadership and management mean that the school is not yet outstanding.
- Teaching is usually good and there are examples of outstanding teaching particularly in the lessons where pupils are taught to understand the connection between sounds and letters. Teachers use their well-developed subject knowledge and their accurate assessment of pupils' prior learning to set challenging tasks in the main part of lessons. Occasionally more-able pupils mark time during the introduction to lessons. Pupils' targets are not always referred to in lessons or teachers' marking. Assessment information is not always used effectively to inform teachers' planning in the Reception class.
- Pupils' behaviour is consistently good both in lessons and around school. Pupils apply themselves well in lessons. They are keen to make progress and are proud of their school. More than one said 'I love my school'. Pupils say they feel safe and the school ensures that they know how to manage risk.
- The ambitious leadership and drive of the headteacher, senior and middle managers and the governing body have created the conditions for learning that have allowed pupils to thrive. This includes establishing a good curriculum that successfully promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school's systems for checking pupils' attainment and progress in Key Stage 1 and 2 are rigorous, but senior managers are not as skilled in the analysis of attainment at the end of the Reception class. Robust links are not always made between teaching and outcomes for pupils when observing lessons and the range of staff involved in observing lessons is relatively narrow.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of teaching that is outstanding by:
 - ensuring that the activities planned for children in the Reception class are informed by assessment information and meet children’s individual needs
 - making certain that more-able pupils are always fully challenged during the introduction of lessons
 - making sure that teachers regularly refer to pupils’ targets in lessons and when they are marking pupils’ work.
- Increase the focus on excellence for key leaders by:
 - developing leaders’ abilities to analyse attainment and progress in the Reception class
 - ensuring that rigorous links are always made between teaching strategies and outcomes for pupils when observing lessons
 - providing middle leaders with more opportunities to carry out lesson observations.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers are correct when they say that their children are making good progress in lessons. Children’s starting points can differ from year to year; most children have well-developed social skills, but weaker skills in communication, language and literacy and in calculation when they join the Reception class. They make consistently good progress as they move through the school. There is an exciting curriculum in the Reception class where the jungle theme has really enthused children. Progress in Key Stage 1 had been relatively slow and attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 was below average but the school has taken rigorous action to tackle this. Consequently, progress over time and in lessons in Key Stage 1 is now good and pupils’ attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has improved and is now above average, including in reading. Pupils are making exceptional progress in phonics lessons in the Reception class and Key Stage 1. As a result children have a good understanding of how letters can combine to make specific sounds. They are able to segment words and blend sounds and use these skills effectively when they are trying to read or write unfamiliar words.

Although progress is good in Key Stage 2, until recently progress has been better in reading and writing than in mathematics. Pupils are now very enthusiastic about mathematics lessons because they find them enjoyable and challenging. This reflects improvements in the way mathematics is taught. The school has carefully identified gaps in pupils’ mathematical understanding and has worked well to close these gaps during small-group sessions. This has improved outcomes for pupils, whatever their level of ability. Attainment is now above average at the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics and an above-average proportion of pupils is reaching the higher Level 5. Pupils’ writing is particularly engaging because sentences are well-constructed and pupils have a good range of vocabulary. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress. This is because the work set is matched carefully to their needs. Teaching assistants are proficient at reshaping teachers’ explanations and ensuring that pupils fully understand the concepts that are being taught.

Quality of teaching

As a result of mainly good teaching and some which is outstanding, all pupils, including those who have special educational needs, achieve well over time. Many parents and carers correctly say that teaching is good and recognise the improvements that have been made. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and pupils respond very well to praise from staff. Teachers have good subject knowledge reflecting regular professional development. They use this knowledge particularly well in the promotion of basic skills. In the best lessons work is consistently well-matched to pupils' needs when they are working independently. This is because there has been a very robust focus on ensuring that teachers are crystal clear about what levels pupils are working at in reading, writing and mathematics. Better challenge for the most-able pupils has boosted their progress. Nevertheless, there are still times during relatively long introductions to lessons when more-able pupils have to sit and listen to explanations of concepts that they already understand and could be getting on with their work. Detailed assessments are made of children's skills when they are in the Reception class but this useful information is not always used promptly to inform teachers' planning and to ensure that activities are well-matched to the needs of individual children.

Many teachers are good at promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; for example, in lessons that focused on poetry pupils were encouraged to appreciate the natural world around them and the development of descriptive language was combined with a sense of wonderment. Visits and special events enrich the well-planned curriculum and are used well to enhance teaching. The school is aware that the marking of pupils' writing is occasionally inconsistent in quality. However, pupils receive very good feedback in their mathematics books and this has helped to boost pupils' progress. Although pupils are set academic targets, these are rarely referred to in lessons or in marking.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The staff have created an ethos which promotes positive attitudes to learning and an environment that allows pupils to feel safe. High expectations of standards of behaviour in and out of the class room result in constantly good behaviour over time and a calm ethos in school. This positive ethos extends into the before- and after-school club. Pupils enjoy attending the club and feel safe and secure because relationships between staff and pupils are particularly warm. Pupils have positive attitudes in lessons, and are keen to get on with their work and this makes a good contribution to their learning. Most parents and carers say that their children are very happy at school and, together with many pupils, say they have no experience of bullying. However a small number of parents and carers feel that more could be done to discourage bullying. The school actively tackles bullying and has done much to discourage cyber-bullying. Nevertheless, the school recognises that it could be more rigorous in the way it records minor incidents and informs parents and carers about the actions it has taken to prevent reoccurrences. The school provides pupils with appropriate guidance about staying safe, including when crossing roads and moving towards independence. Pupils attend school regularly and levels of attendance are above average. The large majority of pupils are punctual to school.

Leadership and management

Accelerated progress and rising levels of attainment, reflect the high expectations of key leaders, including the governing body, and illustrate the school's good capacity to improve further. Good teamwork is a strong feature amongst the staff and this contributes to well to high staff morale. The school has further enhanced its good systems for assessing and tracking pupil progress. The school is able to spot swiftly any pupil in Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2 whose progress is in danger of slowing and offer timely and effective support. These data are also used effectively as a management tool to identify where improvements could be made. However, leaders and managers are not as good at analysing data from the Reception class as they are at analysing information from other areas of the school. There is a coherent programme of monitoring and evaluation that is securely linked to development-planning. This cycle is particularly strong in mathematics where excellent leadership has had a significant impact on improving outcomes for pupils. In lesson observations rigorous links are not always made between teaching strategies and outcomes for different groups of pupils. Additionally, the conscientious and talented middle managers have not yet fully developed their skills relating to the impact of teaching on learning. Nevertheless, teaching has improved because there has been extensive professional development for teachers and support staff. For example, training on the teaching of phonics and mathematics has had a very positive effect on outcomes for pupils.

The broad and balanced curriculum meets pupils' needs and is good at promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Throughout the school there is a very strong emphasis on improving basic skills, including developing pupils' abilities to manipulate numbers in their heads and ensuring they have regular opportunities to produce long pieces of writing. There are plentiful opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities such as membership of the 'Win Win Gang' that help pupils to resolve fallings out in the playground. These responsibilities enhance pupils' social skills and help them to become more self-assured. A greater emphasis on music is helping to encourages pupils' creative development. The school has improved its links with schools where pupils have more varied backgrounds and has also developed its programme of visits to places of worship such as mosques and synagogues. This is improving pupils' understanding of different faiths and cultures. Equality is promoted well to try to ensure that every child reaches their full potential irrespective of their background. Discrimination is not tolerated. As a result, gaps between outcomes for different groups of pupils are narrowing. Governors have a very strong focus on safeguarding and together with staff are vigilant in their efforts to keep children safe.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add up exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



24 February 2012

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of St Michael and All Angels C of E Primary School, Halifax, HX3 7QU

It was a delight and a privilege to visit your school. We really enjoyed talking to you all and listened very carefully to what you had to say. We were very impressed by your good manners and the thoughtful way you treat adults and each other. The recent Year 5 residential visit sounded very exciting and is good to know that Year 6 is looking forward to the visit to Llandudno.

Your attainment is above average. You make good progress because there is a lot of good teaching in your school. In order to make teaching outstanding we have asked staff to make sure that those of you who find learning easy are not marking time during the introductions of lessons. We have also asked them to make sure they refer to your targets more in lessons and when they mark your work. Staff in the Reception class are very good at checking children's learning, but they do not always use this information to make sure that the activities they plan challenge all of the children. We have asked them to improve this aspect of their work.

The leaders and managers at your school are doing a good job and are working hard to make your school into one of the very best. We have asked the school leaders to make sure they always fully understand the data about children's attainment and progress in the Reception class. We have also asked them to make sure that more staff have a chance to look at lessons and to make sure that they look more carefully at the way teaching affects your progress.

You can help by continuing to try very hard in all your lessons.

Yours sincerely,

Susan Walsh
Lead Inspector

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