

Inspection of St Malachy's Catholic Primary School, A Voluntary Academy

Furness Place, Illingworth, Halifax, West Yorkshire HX2 8JY

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 March 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where pupils are happy, safe and secure. Leaders say that 'love is at the heart of the school', and it is. All staff show a deep care for pupils, their families and each other.

Following a period of staffing and leadership turbulence, a new and ambitious leadership team is implementing a range of changes. These include developing the curriculum so that pupils achieve much higher standards than they have done in the past. Leaders' expectations are high, and although these changes are not yet fully impacting, they are improving the quality of education for pupils.

Leaders ensure that this is a safe place for pupils to learn. Everybody in school understands the new code of conduct. This is helping everyone be the 'the very best version of themselves'. In lessons and social times, pupils get along well together and are productive. Pupils know about different types of bullying and feel that if they experienced this, staff would listen, take action and put a stop to it.

Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and learning. They particularly enjoy the forest school, which inspires and motivates them. This helps them to develop confidence, cooperation and resilience.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

In the past, the achievements of many pupils have not been good enough. Leaders are taking rapid action to address this. They have reviewed their curriculums for English, mathematics and science. They have ensured that these subjects are well planned and sequenced. Teachers teach and check the required knowledge well. As a result, more pupils are now meeting the curriculum expectations. Across other subjects, such as history, curriculum thinking is less specific about what pupils need to know. This means that teachers are not clear about what to check to make sure pupils are learning well.

Leaders place great importance on teaching pupils to read. Staff have received training on how to teach the phonics programme, but some are not yet confident in this. Teachers ensure that pupils read books that match the sounds that they are learning. Pupils who need extra support get the help they need to become confident readers. Pupils are able to talk about their favourite stories and authors.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported. Leaders know the needs of these pupils very well, and ensure teachers meet these needs. In lessons, adults support pupils with additional speech and language needs by revisiting, explaining and encouraging them to use key vocabulary. The school's nurture provision is a special place. Here, pupils with complex social and emotional needs receive support to understand and manage their feelings. Pupils take 'mindful moments' as part of the planned curriculum to support their learning. Pupils value

this provision. One pupil said, 'Nurture is a place that gives children a reason to keep on going.'

The early years environment is welcoming and stimulating. Children enjoy selecting activities and remain engaged in their learning. Staff encourage them to be kind, polite and caring, and they cooperate well. Children enjoy activities such as playing shopping in the mathematics area, using a calculator and discussing what they have bought. Leaders are actively reviewing their curriculum plans to ensure that they have clearly defined the knowledge and skills that they want children to gain in readiness for Year 1. This work is not yet fully complete and, as a result, some activities are not always determined by long-term curriculum thinking.

Pupils develop well spiritually. They understand themselves, and regularly connect with nature in the forest school. Pupils talk about equality and the need to treat everyone with kindness. Pupils learn about major world religions during an annual interfaith week. This learning is not regular enough to ensure a deep awareness of other faiths. While pupils have a strong understanding of the rule of law, their knowledge of other British values is less well developed.

Senior leaders establish a culture of care, guidance and support. This extends to their development of staff. Many subject leaders are new to their role or do not have experience of checking how well their subject is being taught. Senior leaders are systematically working with each subject leader to develop their skills. As a result, they better assure themselves that the curriculum is meeting the needs of all pupils.

Leaders take the impact of workload on staff seriously. Staff say that they feel valued, appreciated and motivated. Trust leaders regularly check on the quality of provision in the school, and hold leaders to account for this. The trust improvement board provides a high level of challenge and support to leaders. Together, these layers of leadership are achieving more for the pupils in their care.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding is everyone's priority. They ensure that the necessary checks are made on adults who work with pupils.

All staff understand the systems for reporting concerns about pupils' welfare. Staff receive appropriate and regular safeguarding training. This means that they have the knowledge and skills to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. The safeguarding team shows tenacity when securing the support that these pupils need.

Staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe. Pupils are knowledgeable about topics such as online safety and healthy relationships.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The teaching of phonics is not yet of a consistent quality. As a result, not all pupils are securing phonic knowledge as effectively as they could. Leaders should ensure that staff, particularly those who support the most vulnerable readers, develop further confidence and skill in delivering the phonics programme.
- In some subjects, leaders' definition of the knowledge that they want pupils to learn is not precise enough. Consequently, in these subjects, pupils do not learn as well as they could. Leaders need to identify the crucial content to be learned in foundation subjects, from the early years foundation stage to Year 6. They should make sure that this is the content that is assessed formatively in lessons.
- Many subject leaders are new to their role. They do not yet fully check the implementation of their curriculum. This means that subject leaders do not have a clear picture of how the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils. Senior Leaders should continue to support subject leaders in developing the skills that they need to carry out regular checks on curriculum effectiveness.
- Leaders' approach to teaching pupils about other faiths and some British values is not well defined. As a result, pupils are less well prepared for life in modern Britain. Leaders should further develop the curriculum so that pupils benefit from more structured learning about, and experiences of, diversity and commonality in British society.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	141480
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	10241672
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	158
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Antonia Dorsey
Headteacher	Mary Hodges
Website	http://www.stmalachysprimary.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The academy is part of the Blessed Peter Snow Catholic Academy Trust.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, subject leaders and other leaders from the school.
- Members of the trust improvement board and the trust's director of education met with the inspectors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading and phonics, mathematics, history and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of

lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Pupils' behaviour and safety were evaluated during lessons and social times. Inspectors spoke to pupils, teachers and leaders about their views on behaviour.
- Senior leaders met inspectors to discuss recruitment and safeguarding records. Inspectors reviewed the school's single central record of the checks undertaken on adults who work with pupils in the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised documents related to safeguarding and spoke to the schools' designated safeguarding lead. They spoke to staff and pupils about their safeguarding knowledge.
- Inspectors met groups of pupils. Inspectors also reviewed Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and survey responses from staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Lee Wilson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Peter Heaton

Ofsted Inspector

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