

Alice Ingham Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105832
Local Authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	287344
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Kathleen McArthur

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	141
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr Joseph Sweeney
Headteacher	Mrs Briege Sivills
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2002
School address	Millgate Halifax Road Rochdale Lancashire OL16 2NU
Telephone number	01706 341560
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Age group	5–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than most. It serves an area where many families experience high levels of social and economic disadvantage and the proportion of pupils receiving a free school meal is almost three times the national average. The great majority of pupils are of white British heritage and speak English as their home language. Many more than the usual number of pupils enter or leave the school part way through their education. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need.

The school holds numerous awards, including Healthy Schools, Investors in People, Green Flag and the Leading Aspect for Collaborative Working.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that gives good value for money. The inspection confirmed the school's evaluation of how effective it is. Good leadership and committed teamwork result in a harmonious community where pupils work and play happily together. Parents are very supportive, demonstrated in the vigorous way they united with staff and governors to oppose recent closure proposals successfully. Many commented favourably on the Christian environment where their children are happy and enjoy learning.

Achievement is good. Children enter the Foundation Stage with skills well below those typical for their age. Progress is good throughout the school because teaching is effective, based on a good curriculum that provides interesting activities. By the time pupils leave, standards are broadly in line with those expected nationally in English, mathematics and science. Pupils make the least progress in spelling, punctuation, and vocabulary. Consequently, standards are below average in writing. Most lessons are lively and move along at a good pace. Pupils find the varied activities make their lessons interesting so they try hard, achieve well, and as one said, 'We learn and have fun at the same time.' Several parents remarked that they are pleased with their children's progress.

Pupils are clearly happy in school. One parent commented that her child loves going to school every morning. Pupils said, 'It's a healthy school,' and they know how to look after their health. They feel safe and secure in school. Pupils understand the rules, think they are fair and so they behave well. They show a lot of concern for the needs of others and are keen to organise fundraising activities for charities, such as 'St Joseph's Penny'. Pupils are extremely proud to be one of the very few local schools to gain the Green Flag award for environmental work, and eagerly show visitors the outdoor classroom where they grow vegetables and plants. During their time in school, pupils acquire academic, personal and social skills that prepare them suitably for the future.

Pupils are well cared for in school. Good relationships feature strongly at all levels. Adults and pupils show mutual respect and value each other; this adds to the secure, happy atmosphere in school. Well deployed teaching assistants provide highly skilled pastoral and academic support, particularly for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Parents speak very highly of the way these pupils are welcomed, supported and included in all activities. Good systems track and monitor academic progress closely, and help is quickly directed where needed. In some classes, pupils 'self-assess' to check how well they are doing so they know what to do to improve their work. However, this is still at an early stage of development throughout the school and, in many cases, pupils are not sufficiently sure what they must do to improve their work.

The dedicated leadership of the headteacher gives a firm steer and clear direction for school improvement to benefit each and every pupil. She is ably supported in this by the knowledgeable deputy headteacher and the strong governing body. Honest evaluation of performance ensures that the school aims high and reaches challenging targets. Issues from the previous inspection have been rigorously tackled, but attendance, although improving, remains below average despite the school's best efforts. Determined leadership firmly focused on improvement has ensured that standards have risen, despite recent uncertainties over the school's future, and there is good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Children enter school with skills well below those typical for their age. They are welcomed into the secure, friendly Reception class. Personal, social and emotional development is promoted well so children quickly gain in confidence and begin to explore the stimulating range of practical activities. Good teaching by an effective team who know the children and their families well ensures children make good progress in all areas of learning. Staff work hard to increase children's limited vocabulary and language skills by talking and discussing their ideas and activities at every opportunity. The children are keen to work outside where different activities extend learning effectively and they really enjoy using the large wheeled toys. However, children cannot access the outdoor area independently and space is very limited in the classroom. Progress is carefully checked and extra support put in place where most needed. When children move to Year 1, their skills are below those usually seen.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' knowledge of punctuation, spelling, vocabulary and how to organise their writing.
- Ensure that all pupils are fully involved in the assessment of their learning so they know what they must do to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The majority of pupils enter Year 1 with attainment below that usually seen at their age. By the time they leave the school, standards are broadly similar to those expected nationally, which represents good progress. A high proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Highly skilled support and suitable adaptations to the curriculum enable these pupils to make good progress in relation to their capabilities.

In Key Stage 1, pupils build steadily on the good progress they made in the Foundation Stage, but have a lot of ground to cover. At the end of Year 2, standards are below average in reading, writing and mathematics and few pupils reach the higher levels. Progress speeds up in Years 5 and 6 as pupils gain skills and knowledge. It also accelerates in relation to the particularly strong teaching they receive in Year 6. Standards in Key Stage 2 have risen in recent years and in 2007 most pupils reached the nationally expected level in English and mathematics and did particularly well in science; every pupil reached the expected level and half attained the higher level. Results in English at the higher level were just above average and pupils exceeded their statutory target. Reading skills are good but about a third of the year group did not reach the national level in writing. Vocabulary is limited and pupils find it hard to organise ideas on paper, and to spell and punctuate their work correctly. Work seen in lessons and the school's tracking information show that pupils in the current Year 6 are working in line with their predicted targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are happy; they enjoy school and the wide range of clubs and activities on offer. They report that they feel safe and are sure they can go to any member of staff if they have a problem or worry. Behaviour is good. Pupils accept the need for rules and, although they say there may

be 'small slip ups', they do not see bullying as a problem. They show good understanding of how to stay healthy through diet and exercise and spoke excitedly about a recent cookery lesson when they made healthy pasta and vegetable couscous. The school has good community links with the parish. Pupils are generous in fundraising events and enjoy singing to the elderly at Christmas. They are eager to take on responsibilities as play leaders, school councillors or members of the Eco team. Suitable academic and information and communication technology (ICT) skills together with good personal and social skills prepare them well for their future life.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Assemblies encourage pupils to consider issues and values so they are very aware of the needs of others and have a good sense of right and wrong. Pupils proudly said, 'This is a Fair Share School.' Active global links with a school in Kenya help them understand life in a very different culture.

Attendance is below average. Rigorous actions have raised attendance levels. Despite very good work by the dedicated learning mentor, some families fail to ensure that their children attend regularly and punctually.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good so pupils enjoy their lessons and make good progress through the school. Particularly strong teaching was seen in Year 6 and pupils make rapid progress. Most staff provide activities that challenge and hold pupils' attention and are well matched to their individual needs. Staff are skilled in managing behaviour so learning is not disrupted. Most lessons move along at a lively pace so pupils maintain concentration and listen carefully; in the minority of lessons where this is not the case, pupils quickly lose attention and progress slows down. Teaching assistants are well deployed and provide very skilled support, particularly to groups targeted for extra help and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, so these pupils make good progress. Information from tracking and monitoring systems is used well to plan the next steps in learning and direct help where needed. Strategies to improve writing include increasing speaking skills to help pupils organise their thoughts and ideas, but these have yet to show a real impact.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum meets all statutory requirements. Literacy, numeracy and ICT have priority and pupils use their skills in other subjects; for example, writing about coastal formations in geography. A review of the curriculum to link subjects more meaningfully is at an early stage. Careful adaptations meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities well so they make good progress. The good programme for personal development results in well behaved pupils who enjoy school and are prepared to be responsible members of society. The curriculum is enriched very effectively and pupils enjoy activities arranged with the local Catholic Schools Federation. Visits support work in class, for example to the Stockport Air Raid Shelters, and older pupils have good opportunities for residential visits. The school offers a really wide range of popular clubs, many held at lunchtime so everyone can attend.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

High quality care and support for all pupils add to their enjoyment, well-being and good progress. Parents praised the Christian teaching that permeates all aspects of school life and has a positive effect on pupils' attitudes, behaviour and self-esteem. The school meets all current requirements for safeguarding pupils. Staff with responsibility for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities liaise closely with a range of service providers to ensure that the care and support provided to vulnerable children and their families is of the highest order. Children settle quickly, regardless of when they join the school, because of the caring, friendly welcome they receive. Good transition arrangements ensure that pupils move on to their next stage of education confidently. Robust systems track and monitor pupils' academic progress closely and regular reviews ensure that staff quickly direct help if any pupil falls behind. Most teachers mark pupils' work with helpful written comments for improvement. Pupils know their individual literacy and numeracy targets. In some classes, pupils assess their own work against success criteria so they know how well they are doing and are becoming more involved in their own learning. However, in other classes, pupils are not yet fully aware of what they should do in order to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

There is a strong sense of teamwork and purpose between staff and governors. The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, has implemented a clear vision for improvement aimed at raising standards and ensuring that all pupils reach their full potential academically, personally and socially. Subject leaders are taking increased responsibility for standards and contributing to staff training and planning future developments. Governance is good. Governors are keen to challenge and question while providing informed support and the school really benefits from their good local knowledge. There is a strong emphasis on ensuring equal opportunities for every pupil. This has added to the school's reputation, attracting a high proportion of pupils with extra learning needs. The school makes very good use of links with the local school federation and makes full use of all external agencies to support pupils and their families. Finances are managed carefully to support school improvement and building refurbishment, with good arrangements for staff to develop and refine their professional skills.

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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	3
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	2
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

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	2
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**

I would like to say a big thank you to everyone for making me so welcome when I visited your school this week. You were helpful and friendly so I was able to find all the information I needed to complete my work. You must be very proud of your Green Flag award. The school garden is going to look lovely when the plants all start to grow and flower. I hope you raised lots of money for St Joseph's Penny and I am sure you will soon hear from your friends at the Alice Ingham School in Africa.

I thought you would like to know what I found at your school.

You go to a good school and have good teachers who make sure you are well cared for. Your parents like the school and think it helps you all to do well. Your smiling faces told me that you are happy and enjoy your work so you all make good progress. The standards you reach in mathematics, science and reading are right for your age but I found that you need to improve your writing skills.

You know how to be healthy, you behave well and told me that you feel safe. You try to help others and do lots of jobs to help in school. I know you enjoy visiting different places and you have many clubs in school.

I have asked the teachers to help you improve your spelling, vocabulary and punctuation. They will help you organise your ideas and make your writing more interesting. Some of you know how to check how well you are doing; I have suggested that the teachers make sure that you can all do this.

I know you will help them by working hard and continuing to enjoy everything you do at Alice Ingham School.