

Radcliffe Hall Church of England/Methodist Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105330
Local Authority	Bury
Inspection number	308832
Inspection dates	11–12 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Jim Kidd

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	325
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Eileen Jones
Headteacher	Mrs Todhunter
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2004
School address	Bury Street Radcliffe Manchester Lancashire M26 2GB
Telephone number	0161 724 4928
Fax number	0161 253 7401

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	11–12 June 2008
Inspection number	308832

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average sized school serves an area in which there is some significant social and economic disadvantage. The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals and with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are above average. The vast majority of pupils are White British. Of the below average number from minority ethnic heritages, about half speak English as an additional language. Radcliffe Hall is an accredited Healthy School and also holds Activemark status for its work in physical education. It is housed in a building which is over a hundred years old and has recently been designated a Phase 2 Children's Centre. Since the previous inspection a new headteacher and deputy headteacher have taken up post.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Radcliffe Hall is a satisfactory school, in which pupils' personal development and well-being are good. As a result of an overriding emphasis on developing the climate for learning, pupils' behaviour has improved significantly since the previous inspection and their attitudes to school are very positive indeed. As they comment, 'Our teachers are always there for us when we find things difficult and we like to help each other too!'

Pupils behave well and are welcoming and courteous to visitors. They are delighted to show off their work and are more than willing to use the vibrant display in classrooms as a resource for their learning. They have a well-developed social conscience and their extensive work for charity and support for younger pupils in school demonstrates their good contribution to the community. They write prayers for assembly and sing the school song, 'We are the pupils of Radcliffe Hall!' with real pride. The choir has a very well earned reputation in the local community. Pupils enjoy being part of the decision-making process and the school council is pro-active in making suggestions as to how the school can be improved further. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe and what is a healthy lifestyle. They take full advantage of the wide variety of sports activities to keep as fit as they can. This reflects the external awards the school has gained.

Standards in English, mathematics and science are below average by the end of Year 6, but importantly, they are improving, and pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress in their studies across the school. A three-year fall in results in Key Stage 1 has been halted and standards in the current Year 2, although below average, are rising. Girls reach higher standards than boys overall, but the gap is narrowing. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same progress as their classmates as a result of effective support from teachers and teaching assistants.

The school is doing much to improve the satisfactory quality of teaching and learning and there are examples of outstanding teaching in Key Stage 2. However, expertise in ensuring that expectations are consistently high and that challenge for pupils is always appropriate is inconsistent and not shared well enough across all classes. Some teaching does not offer pupils enough opportunities to take increasing responsibility for their own learning.

The curriculum is satisfactory with an increasing number of extra-curricular activities. The school promotes basic skills development step-by-step. Pastoral care is a strength of the school and adults ensure that all pupils can take full advantage of everything on offer. Academic guidance is satisfactory overall but the monitoring of pupils' progress does not always enable any underachievement to be highlighted quickly enough. As a result, strategies to promote higher achievement are sometimes not well matched to pupils' needs.

Overall leadership and management are satisfactory; however, the headteacher provides good leadership and a clear direction for development. The impact of this work and of the work of the talented and committed leadership team is already evident in pupils' improved behaviour and rising standards. The role of middle leaders is not developed enough to ensure that staff take full responsibility for standards and achievement in their subjects. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of what the school is doing for their children and comment, 'This school is an enjoyable place to be and every teacher is approachable and helpful.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children enter the Nursery with skills which are mostly below age-related expectations, particularly in communication, language and literacy. In addition, children's emotional development is often weak. The high priority given to pastoral support and the emphasis on promoting children's independence in learning lead to satisfactory achievement in their academic work and good progress in their personal and social development. By the end of the Reception year, children's attainment is below that typically expected overall, although an increasing proportion of children attain the expected levels for their age.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The good relationships between adults and children and between children aids pupils' learning. Children are happy and look forward to coming to school each day. Children are fascinated by their 'listening walks' when they listen very carefully to the sounds around them. This helps them to listen carefully to letter sounds and assists their early skills at reading and writing. Assessment as a tool to focus on specific steps to learning is not sharp enough. The satisfactory curriculum provides a sound range of activities, although the outdoor area is underdeveloped. As a result, there are insufficient opportunities to support children's physical development. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Share good practice in teaching across the school in order to raise expectations of what pupils can do and challenge them to take more responsibility for their own learning.
- Monitor the progress of pupils more closely, in order to identify any possible underachievement and to establish more appropriate strategies for academic support.
- Develop the role of middle leaders in taking more responsibility for performance in their subject areas.

A small proportion of the schools where 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

From below average standards on entry to Year 1, pupils make satisfactory progress across the school and attain below average standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave at the end of Year 6. A three-year fall in standards in Key Stage 1 has been rectified and inspection evidence shows that attainment in the current Year 2, although below average is better than it has been for some considerable time. There is a similar picture of improved achievement in Key Stage 2. For example, the progress of pupils in 2007 was much better than in 2006. Visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work confirm this improving trend: targets are challenging and standards are rising but are still not high enough in English and mathematics in particular.

As a result of the reorganisation of arrangements, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress and are supported effectively by talented support assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and the school is rightly proud of this marked improvement since the previous inspection. Emphasis on personal, social and health education leads to pupils' good behaviour and keen understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. Moreover, pupils' self-esteem is rising: they have more confidence in their own ability as a result. This has a profound effect on their academic progress. Their lively 'rap poems' in the playground at break demonstrate just how much their creative talents are being fostered; pupils produce their own magazine and the school council uses its skills and budget well to organise events such as a school disco.

Pupils have a well-developed social conscience. Very well prepared assemblies encourage them to recognise and applaud kindness and consideration for others: there are many opportunities for them to receive praise and encouragement for their efforts. Attendance is broadly average but there are small numbers of pupils who do not come to school regularly and this slows their progress. Pupils are soundly prepared for the next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with some examples of good practice in all key stages and examples of outstanding practice in Key Stage 2. Where teaching is good or better, teachers have high expectations of the standards their pupils can attain and challenge them appropriately to make sure this happens. However, the sharing of this good practice is underdeveloped. In the better lessons good use of questioning requires pupils to think deeply about the subject-matter and to justify their opinions. In an excellent Year 6 literacy lesson on *The Highwayman* by Alfred Noyes, for example, pupils made perceptive comments on the characters' feelings and challenged each other to higher levels of performance. In a significant number of lessons, however, teachers direct pupils' learning too much and provide too few opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own progress. In these lessons, pupils are not always fully engaged in the activities and have few chances to learn from each other. The marking of pupils' work is of inconsistent quality, although at best, there is an abundance of advice on how pupils can improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets the needs and aspirations of most pupils and has a good impact on their personal development. There is an appropriate emphasis on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Arrangements for ICT have improved since the previous inspection. However, pupils do not use computers enough in all subjects for personal research. Although the school is beginning to see the value of a cross-curricular approach, pupils do not always recognise the links between different subjects. They have insufficient opportunities to transfer and thus reinforce their skills across subjects. Best use possible is made of the accommodation.

The school promotes racial harmony and community cohesion through, for example, studying other countries and celebrating cultural diversity. There is an increasing range of extra-curricular activities, including sport: pupils speak highly of the choir, the art club and gym club as just

three examples of how the curriculum is extended to add enjoyment. Pupils also have opportunities to take part in residential trips which foster team building.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The pastoral care for pupils is good and is a strength of the school. Parents agree and one spoke for many saying, 'My child has blossomed since joining Radcliffe Hall because he is always encouraged by the staff.' Vulnerable pupils and those who suffer from low self-esteem are supported well and with sensitivity by teaching assistants and the pupil support worker who ensure that these pupils have full access to everything that the school offers. As a result, the progress of pupils with learning difficulties is improving. Procedures for child protection and safeguarding meet current requirements.

Academic guidance is satisfactory overall but assessment procedures are inconsistent across the school. The monitoring of pupils' progress does not always recognise quickly enough when individuals are experiencing difficulty and as a result, strategies for support are sometimes not fully appropriate to their needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Following a period of uncertainty when pupils' achievement began to fall, the senior leadership team is firmly and effectively focused upon raising standards and achievement. The determined senior leadership team has produced a clear and well founded plan to raise achievement. An accurate evaluation of the school's performance and the establishment of effective strategies to improve the quality of teaching and the climate for learning are already bearing fruit: pupils' behaviour and attitudes to school are improving apace and their academic standards are rising as a result. There are good partnerships with local churches and other schools. For example, a local high school provides ICT equipment for use by pupils in Key Stage 2. Middle leaders are committed to developing an appropriate curriculum across the school but their monitoring role is underdeveloped. As a result, they do not take enough responsibility for pupils' performance in their subjects. The governing body is supportive and is developing its analytical skills in order to be able to challenge the leadership more rigorously. The school has a clear vision for how provision can be developed, demonstrates a satisfactory capacity for further improvement and provides satisfactory value for money.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
--	-----------------------

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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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 disabilities make progress	3

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?	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

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?	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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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 so much for the wonderful welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school recently. You were very friendly and polite and we enjoyed talking to you in lessons and in the playground. We really enjoyed your singing in the assemblies and are particularly grateful to those of you in Year 5/6 who performed Macbeth for us. I would now like to tell you what we found out about your school.

Radcliffe Hall gives you a satisfactory quality of education and enables you to make good progress in your personal development. Your behaviour in lessons and around school is good and you care for each other well. Older pupils look after younger ones at play and lunchtime and the school council makes well-thought-out suggestions as to how your school can improve further. You also have a really impressive choir which sings beautifully and which performs at many local venues.

Your teachers ensure your sound progress in lessons and we have asked them to share with each other the good things they do so that you can get better results, especially in English and mathematics. Adults in school take good care of you, whether you are very clever or sometimes find the work difficult. They are now going to look more closely at how well you are doing so that they can identify quickly when you need more help with your work.

Your headteacher and all the other staff have really good ideas about other things they can do to make Radcliffe Hall even better. We have suggested that priority is given to checking how well you are doing in all subjects. You can help too, by continuing to work hard in lessons, to look after each other and always to do the very best you can!

Thank you once again for your contribution to the inspection. It was a pleasure to meet you and to watch you learn.