

St Malachy's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107545
Local Authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	309428
Inspection date	14 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Marie Cordey

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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	166
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	
Headteacher	Mrs Russell
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2004
School address	Furness Place Illingworth Halifax West Yorkshire HX2 8JY
Telephone number	01422 244628
Fax number	01422 242088

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the quality of teaching and learning; pupils' personal development and well-being; and how well the school's leadership promotes care and high standards. Evidence was gathered from observation of lessons, pupils' work, discussion with pupils, staff, the vice chair of governors, foundation governor, a scrutiny of school documents and parent questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized school set in an area of some social and economic deprivation. A high number of pupils are eligible for free school meals and more than one quarter of the pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has achieved Investor in Pupils and Investor in People status. It has also gained the Healthy School award. Children start school in the Nursery with attainment which is below that expected for their age nationally.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St. Malachy's is a good school where pupils are well behaved and everyone is committed to their welfare. Pupils achieve well to attain broadly average standards. A dip in standards and achievement for Year 6 in 2007 is recognised by the school. This was because a large number of pupils had learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their starting points were much lower. Moreover, targets were not as challenging for this year group as they are now. Swift action has been taken to ensure that effective systems are in place for current pupils to reach challenging targets.

Pupils' writing demonstrates how well achievement has recovered. They are articulate, knowledgeable and excited by sharing their views. At its best, teaching inspires pupils to write with sophisticated vocabulary and evocative description. A Year 6 pupil, for example, wrote 'The Snow Queen who cackles cruelly, white coat hiding a black heart'. Progress in reading has advanced because of the improved teaching of letter sounds although spelling accuracy is not yet as good as pupils' writing skills.

Pupils' behaviour is good and they enjoy coming to school. The weekly celebration assemblies reward pupils' attendance, work and effort. Attendance is broadly average and the school has worked hard to improve the persistent absence rate of a small number of pupils. Pupils eat healthily and sociably in the dining room and exercise regularly. They are tolerant and respectful members of their community. There are limited opportunities for the pupils to learn to understand Britain as a diverse society and to engage with others from a different social background. The school is aware of this and has plans to extend pupils' awareness beyond school.

The quality of teaching is good overall with outstanding examples on occasions. Teaching and learning revolve around planning work to match individual needs precisely. This includes joint planning and good deployment of the teaching assistants. That is why pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and gifted and talented pupils make the same good progress as other pupils. In the best lessons pupils are very involved and enthusiastic because they are nurtured to develop their potential. Parents are happy with the school although a small number are concerned about their child's progress in some classes. The inspection supports this view. There is some inconsistency in teaching. In some lessons, for example, the pupils are less motivated because they are reliant on the teacher and are not as involved in their learning. This is partly because marking is inconsistent and pupils do not generally understand how they are doing in their work or how precisely, to make it better.

Central to the school's character is the drive and commitment of its leaders. They develop good systems to improve learning and meet the varied needs of the pupils. As a result, the pupils enjoy a good curriculum and are cared for well. The headteacher and deputy headteacher empower the pupils to assume responsibility and prepare for their futures. Overall, good leadership and management ensure that arrangements for safeguarding pupils are appropriate. Links with outside supporters and other professionals, such as the local church, educational psychologists, attendance officers and local authority partners, make a good contribution to pupils' well-being and achievement. The school understands its strengths and weaknesses, but judges its performance too generously. This is because both governors and staff are rightly proud of their achievements and the difference the school makes, but do not sufficiently take into account the areas for improvement. Governors are supportive and knowledgeable and they

challenge the school well. The school provides good value for money and has made good improvement since the previous inspection. St. Malachy's has good capacity to improve still further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the Foundation Stage are well provided for and quickly settle into the Nursery and Reception classes. Teaching and learning are good and children make good progress from the low starting points when they joined the Nursery class. The enthusiastic and committed staff team plan a range of activities to promote learning and are especially good at promoting children's personal development and well-being. As a result, children gain in confidence quickly and learn to work on their own as well as with each other. Activities are stimulating and well planned so that children direct themselves in a series of learning activities ranging from role play to letter sounds. The children have limited opportunity to work and play outdoors. Boys' physical skills, in particular, have been hampered by a lack of outside provision, and opportunities to play together and build partnerships are reduced. There are effective systems to track children's individual progress, and the school possesses an overview of the progress made by the class as a whole. Relationships with parents are positive and they are happy with their child's learning and social development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching to ensure that all pupils have knowledge and understanding of how they are doing and what they can do to make their work better.
- Improve the accommodation for outside provision in the Foundation Stage.

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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	2

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	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of St Malachy's Catholic Primary School, Halifax HX2 8JY

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave me when I came to visit your school. I would especially like to thank the pupils who met with me to talk about their views on the school and the many individual pupils who made a point of talking to me. I learned many of your names because you made me feel so much a part of the school. You are all very polite and enthusiastic and enjoy being at school.

I think that yours is a good school because you learn well and improve your standards, especially in reading. You are pleased to be in lessons and love being active and involved. You eat very healthy food and take an active part in physical education lessons and sporting activities. You are confident and cared for and most of your parents are pleased with the school. This is because of the way that the school looks after you. School assemblies are good and it is a lovely to see you collect all your well earned prizes.

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes settle down quickly and enjoy coming to school. They make good improvements to their work. I would like your school to help you understand how you are doing in your work and what can be done to make it better. You can help by asking your teachers about your work and what you could do to make improvements. I would also like the school to improve the outside area and provide more play equipment for the children in the Nursery and Reception class.