

St Malachy's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105532
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	336510
Inspection dates	9–10 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Sarah Drake

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 of pupils on the school roll	196
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Anthony Murray
Headteacher	Mrs Julie Miles
Date of previous school inspection	6 April 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors, one of whom looked specifically at safeguarding. The inspectors spent around 50% of their time looking at pupils' learning in lessons or through scrutiny of the work in their books. They visited 15 lessons, and observed nine different teachers. The inspectors held meetings with governors, senior staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documentation including that related to school management, safeguarding, pupils' attainment and progress. The inspectors also took into account questionnaires returned by 119 parents, 18 staff and 70 Key Stage 2 pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the achievement of pupils in Key Stage 2, with a particular focus on English, to determine whether teaching is sufficiently challenging
- the provision for different groups of pupils, to determine whether it is suitably adapted to their needs
- the school's compliance with those requirements not confirmed in its self-evaluation and success in bringing about improvements, to determine the quality of leadership and management.

Information about the school

This inner-city school, which is of slightly smaller than average size, serves an area where many families experience a variety of challenging circumstances. Two thirds of pupils are White British and the others belong to a range of minority ethnic groups. Around 10% of pupils speak English as an additional language and between them they speak 11 different languages at home. Half the pupils are eligible to receive a free school meal, which is much higher than average. Broadly average numbers have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school provides for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in separate full-time Nursery and Reception classes. The school achieved the Healthy School award in 2010.

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: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This satisfactory school is demonstrating clear signs of improvement, particularly in the rising skill levels of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils' levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 1. These are both broadly average, which demonstrates younger pupils' good progress, with a strength in reading at the end of Year 2 in 2009. At Key Stage 2, pupils' progress and overall standards have been broadly average or below over a number of years with distinct differences between the subjects. In mathematics, pupils achieve well and usually reach standards that are a little above average. In other areas, particularly writing, pupils make slower progress and consistently reach lower than average standards. This is largely because the quality of teaching, particularly the adaptation of work to pupils' different abilities, is inconsistent through the school and is stronger in mathematics than in English. The school is aware of the need to raise standards in English and has taken a number of actions aimed at doing so but, despite some success with targeted support for specific groups of pupils, current overall progress in Key Stage 2 remains satisfactory. The method for recording such information is time-consuming to access and to analyse which makes the tracking of individuals' progress through their time in the school a laborious task. The leadership's clear vision, realistic self-evaluation, determination to improve and proven record in effecting change ensure that there is satisfactory capacity to guide the school towards further improvement.

St Malachy's is particularly successful at providing good quality care and support for individuals that help them to enjoy their learning and grow into thoughtful, polite and well-behaved young people. Typical of parents' comments is, 'The staff go out of their way to assist the children and make them feel safe and happy.' Pupils add, 'Teachers are dependable.' Through music, art and physical activity, as well as the consistently supportive atmosphere within the school, pupils grow in self-esteem and visibly lift their spirits. They are keen to share their excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles and they have a good awareness of the need to show respect and care for others. They leave the school well equipped to face the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards and pupils' achievement in English, particularly writing in Key Stage 2, to at least the levels that they reach in mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' learning, especially in English, by:
 - ensuring that teachers assess pupils' work accurately and use the information when planning lessons to adapt the activities more closely to individuals' needs

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- ensuring that pupils do not spend too much time listening to teachers rather than recalling, thinking and explaining for themselves
 - having higher expectations of the amount of writing that pupils complete
 - consistently providing pupils with clear guidance about what they need to do next to improve their work
 - involving pupils more in evaluating the quality of their work and suggesting ways through which to improve it.
- Improve the clarity of records relating to pupils' progress.
 - About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Up to the end of Year 2, pupils build well on the weak skills with which the majority join the Nursery class and they develop the positive attitudes towards learning that pupils of all ages throughout the school demonstrate. In Key Stage 2, the rate of progress slows to satisfactory for all groups of pupils. Good quality relationships ensure that pupils are happy to volunteer their ideas in lessons and work well together in pairs and small groups. Even when they are expected to listen for a long time rather than getting actively involved, they behave well. They all respond positively to the school's behaviour management system, especially the issuing of award stickers that can be 'spent' at the achievement shop. Pupils follow instructions well and generally work neatly but many take too long writing out the date and learning intention of lessons rather than getting down to creative, written work. Year 6 pupils' books, for example, mostly show an impressive coverage of mathematical work and, in 2009, over half the year group gained the higher level expected for their age. In English, only the books of higher ability pupils contain suitably lengthy continuous writing; in 2009, below average numbers gained the expected Level 4 and only one sixth gained the higher Level 5 in writing.

Pupils' punctuality and attendance levels, which are significantly above those for similar schools nationally, reflect their positive attitudes to school. The staff's efforts here are paying off and mean that lessons run smoothly because pupils are keen to learn. Pupils are adamant that, in their words, 'Nobody gets bullied', and say that they feel safe and can approach staff should they have any concerns, confident of a positive outcome. Pupils are very keen advocates of eating healthily and also eager participants in physical activities. They take great pleasure and pride in sharing their skills in singing and playing musical instruments, both with each other in assemblies and with members of the wider community such as elderly local residents. They try hard to develop the virtues of perseverance, compassion, courage and justice that are promoted by the house system. Through links with the university, older pupils are developing an understanding of the importance of high aspirations, 'not just messing around' and 'having back up plans in case jobs don't happen.' The school operates as a welcoming, happy and harmonious community.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching throughout the school is variable. Some exciting lessons generate a real buzz of purposeful activity, for example when pupils responded to a siren and 'packed like sardines' on the carpet, simulating experiences in the Second World War and, through this, inspiring their creative writing. While all teachers demonstrate suitable subject knowledge, too many lessons move at a pedestrian pace with the teacher reiterating the important points rather than encouraging pupils to use their prior learning and think for themselves. Lesson planning outlines tasks for those of different ability but this adaptation is often not sufficiently finely-tuned to cater for individual needs. Teaching assistants generally provide good quality support for small groups of pupils who find learning harder, but teachers sometimes miss opportunities to increase the challenge for other pupils, for example, by asking questions that require them to provide extended answers. Where pupils have opportunities to evaluate their own and others' work, they hone their analytical skills and understanding of, for example, the different devices writers use to make their work interesting. However, such quality learning is at an early stage of development throughout the school. Similarly,

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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while teachers mark pupils' work regularly, often with a supportive comment, they do not provide enough, tightly-focused guidance about the next steps pupils should take in order to improve their work.

The school is in the throes of adapting the curriculum so that it brings learning to life for pupils and helps them to use their skills more creatively across a range of areas. Currently, it is suitably balanced and includes the teaching of Spanish but in some subjects, such as science, there is an over-reliance on worksheets. Music, physical education and the promotion of pupils' personal, health and emotional development are areas of strength. Pupils use computers across a number of subjects and develop some good skills as demonstrated by, for example, their computer-generated artwork. A range of visits and partnerships, such as with the dental school and Manchester City Football club, enhance the quality of pupils' learning.

Pupils' comments such as, 'I like this school because all the teachers care about me,' succinctly sum up the essence of its success. Staff supervise pupils well to ensure their safety. They know them well as individuals and offer them support that is well tailored to their needs, whether this is time for a quiet chat or practical help for parents filling in application forms for secondary school. Well-judged provision for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or who are learning to speak English ensures that they make similar progress to their peers and achieve satisfactorily. Good partnerships with outside agencies, such as speech and language therapists, enable pupils to develop the necessary skills to support their learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership has a clear vision, shared by all staff, of the type of provision that the school wishes to offer its pupils. The headteacher, in particular, is realistic about its current quality and the steps needed to bring about improvement. She has taken difficult decisions relating to staffing and the maintenance of a large, elderly building and has overseen rising standards for younger pupils. The school's leadership acknowledges that documentation, for example, related to statutory requirements or the impact of actions taken, is not always up to date. Members of the expanded leadership team are taking an increasingly active part in monitoring the quality of provision. Staff receive plentiful training to help them adapt their practice but do not consistently implement new systems, for example related to assessing pupils' progress. Since taking

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the decision to use the services of a clerk, governors are beginning to hold the school more effectively to account as well as to offer it support. The school's emphasis on support for individuals and the warm welcome offered to its increasingly diverse pupil population successfully promote equality of opportunity well. The steps to ensure the safeguarding of pupils from harm are satisfactory with very strong procedures relating to fire hazards – extremely important in a three-storey building. The school has a strong presence in the local community and has recently held a European Week. It has firm action plans to reach out further on a national and global level. The staff offer parents a range of opportunities to engage them in their children's learning. In their turn, parents are supportive of the school and attend functions in good numbers.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children's skills when they join the Early Years Foundation Stage are below the expectations for their age, with particular weaknesses in their emotional and social development and in their ability to communicate. They make good progress so that, by the end of Reception, the majority are working within the expected levels and broadly average numbers have reached the early learning goals set for young children. Currently, the quality of provision is strongest in the Reception class but all children have opportunities to experience good quality learning. They quickly adapt to the well-established routines as adults use praise effectively to reinforce positive behaviour, particularly the importance of sharing with others, which many initially find it hard to do. Well-organised provision to support children's developing skills in linking letters to

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sounds extends into Years 1 and 2 so that children can learn at the right level for them as individuals. This is proving effective in helping to improve children's writing skills. Adults use the notes that they make of individuals' skills development to guide the next steps in their learning and also adapt their planning to build on children's enthusiasms. For example, children were developing their skills in using a computer mouse by drawing some very exotic dinosaurs – their current great interest. Good quality leadership and management have established a strong sense of teamwork and have tried to make best use of an outdoor area which, due to the configuration of the building and site, is far from ideal. Parents are well involved with their children's learning, for example through stay and play sessions where they gain tips on how to help their children learn at home.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

In a strong response to the inspection questionnaire, parents expressed very positive views about the school, particularly praising the attention paid to their children's individual needs. A small number raised concerns about the quality of communication with parents and the organisation at the end of the day. Inspectors judge that the school provides parents with suitable amounts of information. At the end of the day, staff take good care to ensure that children only leave the site with a known adult.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Malachy's RC Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 119 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 196 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	79	66	39	33	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	75	63	41	34	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	67	56	48	40	3	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	65	55	47	39	4	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	63	53	53	45	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	62	52	51	43	3	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	48	40	63	53	5	4	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	48	40	59	50	4	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	51	43	61	51	5	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	51	43	56	47	10	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	46	39	64	54	5	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	46	39	63	53	4	3	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	61	51	55	46	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for 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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



11 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Malachy's RC Primary School, Manchester, M40 7RG

Thank you very much for the warm welcome that you gave me and the other inspectors when we visited your school recently. Particular thanks should go to those of you who gave up your lunchtime and band practice to talk with us. It was good to hear how much you enjoy your time at St Malachy's and also to know that you feel safe and confident that staff will help you if you have any concerns. You are polite, behave well and have an excellent understanding of how to keep yourselves healthy. Well done on achieving your award! Congratulations, too, on your good attendance.

Yours is a satisfactory school and one that is becoming increasingly successful at helping you to make good progress in your learning. The younger children and pupils are doing this now and the older pupils do so in mathematics. We have asked the teachers to focus particularly on helping those of you who are in Key Stage 2 to improve the quality of your writing; we know they are working on this but there is still a way to go. We have made some suggestions about how they might do this. For example, they should find better ways to record the information that they keep about your progress so that they can easily see if there is a problem and take quick action. They should make sure that they set the work at just the right level of difficulty for each of you and also give you clearer guidance about how to improve your work. You can help too by getting down to your writing quickly and not spending too much time on the date and the heading. I know how hard it is to start writing, (it took me ages to start this report!), but once you get going it's amazing what you can achieve – as you know from the amount of work that you manage to get through in maths.

This comes with our very best wishes to all of you in the future – I hope you continue to enjoy learning as much as you do now.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Sarah Drake

Lead inspector

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