

Our Lady of Walsingham Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134877
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	360648
Inspection dates	17–18 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Rodney Braithwaite

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	125
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eamonn McAuley
Headteacher	Maire Hayes (Acting Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons and observed five different teachers. They held meetings with a group of pupils, representatives of the governing body, members of staff and officers of the local authority, and spoke to parents and carers. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation relating to the school's provision for safeguarding, self-evaluation, the school development plan, minutes of governing body meetings, the attainment and analysis of pupils' progress and external evaluations of the school. They analysed responses from 61 parents' and carers' questionnaires and other written responses from pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Why has attainment in mathematics failed to rise for several years and what evidence has the school to indicate any improvement?
- What evidence does the school have for showing the rate of progress of pupils in Key Stage 1 when they are said to enter Year 1 with average age-related skills?
- How effectively are senior and middle managers developing their roles, especially in monitoring teaching and learning, and driving improvement?
- How is the governing body dealing with the uncertainty surrounding the possible future federation of the school, and what strategic plans are being made if this does not take place?

Information about the school

Our Lady of Walsingham is smaller than the average-sized primary school. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. There are a small number of minority ethnic groups, the largest being of Polish heritage. There are a few pupils at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly below average, the largest group having moderate learning difficulties. The school has several mixed-age classes. An acting headteacher has been in post since September 2010. Since the last inspection, there have been several changes of staff but this has now stabilised. For the last year, the school has been in discussion with another local Catholic school about forming a federation. This remains undecided. The school holds National Healthy Schools status and the Activemark award.

There is a private after-school club on the school site. In January 2011, a new private nursery was opened in the same building. These establishments are not managed by the school's governing body and so they are subject to separate inspection.

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

2

Main findings

Our Lady of Walsingham Catholic Primary is a satisfactory school which has had several significant changes in staffing in the last two years. The most important has been the appointment of the acting headteacher last September. She has led the school since then with decisiveness and determination and introduced a number of new initiatives which have led to clear improvements and developing strengths in the school. The most important have been the distribution of wider responsibilities to senior and middle managers, and the improvement in the attainment and progress of pupils in mathematics. In addition, previous strengths in the school, such as pupils' good behaviour and their active involvement in the local community, have been maintained or improved. The care, support and guidance of all groups of pupils are now excellent, and pupils and parents and carers alike have great confidence in the school's ability to provide the highest quality of care for pupils.

The school's relationships and engagement with parents and carers are very positive, enabling them to be fully involved in the education and personal development of their children. Pupils feel exceptionally safe and a parent commented on this, saying, 'The school has a lovely, safe and nurturing environment, and I wouldn't consider sending her anywhere else.' Additionally, the acting headteacher and governing body evaluate the performance of the school accurately, know its strengths, and have a clear picture of how it should move forward after a lengthy period of uncertainty. These factors and the school's recent track record indicate that it has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

The main priorities for the school since the last inspection have been to improve the attainment and progress of pupils in mathematics and science and boys' reading and writing. The improved management of science, and better teaching and resources in English have been successful in raising standards, but there have been continued difficulties in mathematics in Years 3 to 6. However, the impact of the acting headteacher's leadership in mathematics is leading to a marked improvement in attainment and progress. The priority now is for this to be maintained by the increasing development of recently introduced strategies for measuring pupils' progress, and the wider use of pupils' own mathematical experiences in daily life. The school has recognised the need to further develop the use of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills across the curriculum to support pupils' attainment. The school is gradually establishing a more stimulating curriculum, and recognises that gifted and talented pupils, for example, could be offered a wider range of extended opportunities. Pupils also have too few opportunities to develop their understanding of other communities and cultures in the wider world. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and improving. The good teaching observed during the inspection indicates increasingly effective monitoring of teaching and learning by school leaders.

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Up to 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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build upon the recent improvement in attainment and progress in mathematics by:
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to relate mathematics to their own experiences and everyday lives
 - strengthening the developing use of learning strategies to support the individual learning needs of pupils.
- Ensure that the improving curriculum meets the needs of all pupils by:
 - extending the accurate use of English, mathematics and information and communication technology across the curriculum in order to help raise attainment
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to engage with a range of communities and cultures beyond those of the local area
 - expanding curriculum initiatives and challenge offered to gifted and talented pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The attainment of pupils in the last three years has been variable throughout the school. After joining Year 1 with skills slightly below average, pupils have made increasingly better progress in mathematics in Years 1 and 2, and their attainment is slightly above average at the end of Year 2. However, progress has been slower in English, especially in boys' writing, and in reading. From Years 3 to 6, pupils have made much better progress in English and most reach the levels expected of them by the end of Year 6. For several years, progress has been slower in mathematics, mainly in problem solving, although pupils leave Year 6 with attainment that is broadly average. The acting headteacher has led the school in a rigorous drive for improvement in mathematics, which is showing some success. The better use of progress data in planning and more focused teaching have improved attainment in all year groups, and a significantly higher number of pupils are reaching average or above average levels in mathematics. This scenario also applies to the improvement in boys' reading and writing skills in all years. The school realises, however, that this improvement is recent and is not yet consolidated in order to sustain rising attainment and achievement over time. Almost all pupils are now making satisfactory progress, which is leading to satisfactory achievement. This applies equally to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who benefit from the close liaison the school establishes with parents and carers through several members of staff. The steadily rising number of pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress often from low starting points. Learning is helped by the very positive attitudes of pupils who clearly enjoy school. This was observed in a lesson in Year 6 when pupils researched with great interest aspects of waste disposal and recycling, while pupils in Year 5 were potting carrot seeds and discovering the best conditions to encourage growth. Pupils speak very highly of their teachers, saying that 'They care for us, keep us safe, give us fun lessons, help us and always watch us when we are outside.' They regard their relationships as a partnership, one pupil commenting, 'We won't ever let the teachers down.'

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Pupils understand the need to adopt healthy lifestyles, and are enthusiastic about gaining National Healthy Schools status and Activemark. They care for each other, and are keen to take responsibilities and serve on the school council. They are involved very actively with the wider local community particularly through activities with the Catholic partnership, other school councils, and commitment to charities at local and international level. These contribute strongly to the good spiritual, moral and social development of pupils. The attendance of the great majority of pupils is good, but a small number have lengthy absences. This has improved recently as the school makes it clear what is expected in terms of regular term-time attendance. Pupils are steadily improving their basic skills and personal qualities in preparation for their futures.

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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

Although the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, teaching observed during the inspection was good. The rise in attainment in mathematics and an improvement in boys' writing point to an improving picture of teaching. This is because senior leaders, especially the acting headteacher, are offering better support and guidance to the development of teaching and assessment skills. Relationships between pupils and adults are particularly good and teachers manage pupils effectively. This ensures that they are fully motivated and engaged in their learning. This was observed in a lesson in Years 1 and 2 when pupils eagerly used the 'four magic rules' for writing a welcoming message in clear, legible

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handwriting carefully using correct punctuation. Similarly, in Years 3 and 4, pupils talked articulately about the differences between the 'climax' and the 'resolution' of adventure stories they were writing. The use of performance data and the tracking of pupils' progress have improved although they have yet to have a full impact on the long-term attainment of pupils. Occasionally, ongoing understanding of pupils' progress in classes is not precise enough for teachers to know what pupils have learned, so teachers are beginning to build a more effective self-assessment strategy for pupils. The support and intervention of learning support assistants contributes well to pupils' learning and progress.

The curriculum is now being reviewed carefully by leaders, as there have been other higher priorities in recent years. The school timetable is well designed to provide a broad curriculum throughout the day. The curriculum is enriched by collaborative work with a number of partners, giving pupils, for example, opportunities to study in 'forest schools', and to spend days in other schools in Years 2 and 6. More opportunities are being planned for a wider range of cross-curricular activities in order to help the further development of basic skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology. Although gifted and talented pupils are identified by the school, extended provision for them is still in the early stages of development. The curriculum helps the development of pupils' spiritual, moral and social education but there are fewer opportunities that promote their cultural education.

This is a very caring school where pupils in potentially vulnerable circumstances benefit from excellent provision. The school has a very welcoming learning environment and pupils and parents alike feel confident in the advice and support they are given. Care for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has shown improvement under the shared leadership of two special educational needs coordinators. Support for pupils with English as an additional language is excellent. The school has been imaginative in ensuring that it finds help in all ways for the specific language needs of these pupils. It has also taken a number of rigorous and successful initiatives to reduce long-term and holiday absenteeism which has been a problem in the past.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteacher has made a good start in broadening the roles and ambitions of the school management team to match her own. She has taken personal responsibility for ensuring that progress and attainment in mathematics is raised throughout the school. The senior staff are developing into a rigorous management team and have also achieved

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success with the marked improvement in attainment in science since the last inspection. There is good morale throughout the school and all staff are responding enthusiastically to the new leadership. Although there have been significant improvements in several aspects of the school performance, leaders know that there is more to do, particularly in consolidating better attainment, and in extending the monitoring of teaching and learning. Self-evaluation of the school's performance is increasingly accurate as leaders are more robust in their analysis of evidence. The governing body, led by a determined Chair, is proactive and challenging to leaders and other bodies concerned with the future of the school. It has realised that the extended negotiations concerning possible federation need to be concluded quickly so that the school can take decisive steps forward. Members of the governing body have significantly improved their procedures for reviewing policies and ensure that safeguarding procedures reflect good practice, particularly in ensuring that pupils feel safe.

The school is making satisfactory progress in promoting equality of opportunity and tackling any discrimination by dealing with some recent underachievement by, for example, boys in reading. There is excellent engagement with parents and carers, as shown by regular events such as the St. Patrick's Day afternoon tea celebration during the inspection. The school organises a number of information sessions for parents and carers, such as sign language, careers advice and individual parent/child activities. The school has established a good range of partnerships especially with other local schools in Corby and Kettering. The contribution to community cohesion is, otherwise, promoted satisfactorily. The school is planning to broaden this by developing links with contrasting schools both in this country and abroad to improve pupils' knowledge and awareness of cultural diversity and contrasting ways of life.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills below those expected for their age, especially in relation to language skills. A few children have little knowledge of English when they start. Most children make good progress in learning so that many of them reach levels of skill expected for their age by the time they enter Year 1. Children have very good relationships with the adults responsible for their learning and welfare. Consequently, they are happy and settled, feel safe and secure in their surroundings, and quickly gain in self-confidence and independence. Teaching is good and both the teacher and learning support assistant remain calm and caring at all times. A feature is their encouragement of children's speaking, especially those in the early stages of learning English. This was seen to good effect when children were involved in creative activities making 'giants' out of a variety of materials, and were encouraged to repeat the story of Jack and the Beanstalk. Constant praise and 'thumbs up' to show understanding reinforces the positive atmosphere in the class. Adults are planning to improve children's ability to self-evaluate their own learning as some do not yet have an understanding of how they are doing. The outdoor area is spacious and a good resource for learning.

Adults' collection and use of assessment data ensure that the needs of all children are known and provided for. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good and have improved since the last inspection. The leader has established good links with outside learning providers, including the newly-opened pre-school nursery on the school site. Safeguarding and child protection procedures are fully in place, and relationships with parents and carers are excellent.

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

Almost half of all parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. They were very positive in their support for the school and what it does for their children. All of them feel that their children enjoy school, that the school keeps them safe and that the school is well led and managed. Typically, a parent commented. 'My child loves going to school, feels safe, and the staff have always shown encouragement in allowing her to develop all aspects of her education.' Very few parents and carers expressed any concerns. Inspectors looked into issues that were raised and found that the school does all it can to deal with the small number of examples of challenging behaviour, and informs parents and carers regularly about their children's progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Our Lady of Walsingham Catholic 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 61 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 125 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	66	21	34	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	46	75	15	25	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	41	67	15	25	5	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	40	66	19	31	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	36	59	22	36	3	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	52	24	39	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	38	62	21	34	2	3	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)	27	44	26	43	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	54	23	38	3	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	54	21	34	4	7	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	51	24	39	3	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	36	59	21	34	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	42	69	16	26	3	5	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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



21 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Our Lady of Walsingham Catholic Primary School, Corby, NN17 1EE

I would like to thank you for being so welcoming to us when we visited your school recently. We were very pleased to hear how much you enjoy school, how safe you feel, and how well you think about all the staff care for you. It was good to see you taking on responsibilities in assemblies, and helping at the parents' and carers' tea party on St. Patrick's Day. You go to a satisfactory school where you learn to lead healthy lives and join in activities in the church and local community. By the time you leave school at the end of Year 6, your attainment is about what it should be for your age in reading and writing. It has not been quite so good in mathematics as in English for a few years but we found that you are all improving quickly. The youngest children in the Reception/ Year 1 class are getting a good start in their learning.

We discovered that you are very friendly and cheerful and I was very pleased to hear you say that you would never let down your teachers because they look after you so well. Your parents and carers like the school and the staff and are given plenty of opportunities to join you in school and find out what you are learning. We found that the acting headteacher has been doing a good job since she took over in September last year.

We have suggested ways in which the school can improve, and hope that you can help. We would like your teachers to make sure that your improvement in mathematics continues in the future. We have asked that you learn mathematics as much as possible by using it for problems you could face in your own everyday lives. Teachers can also use their assessment and targets for you so that they always know exactly how well you are doing. We would like you to use your English, mathematics and computer skills as often as possible in all subjects. Also, we found that you would benefit from more opportunities to learn about other people around the world. Finally, we would like those of you with special talents to have interesting and exciting challenges in your learning. We are confident that you will continue to improve.

Yours sincerely

Rodney Braithwaite
Lead inspector

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