

Our Lady Roman Catholic Primary School

Woodhall Lane, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 3TF

Inspection dates

7–8 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress in all year groups as they move up through the school. Pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage make exceptionally good progress.
- Pupils enjoy learning and are keen to do well. The standards they achieve are above average.
- The teaching of reading is outstanding and is a major strength of the school. Pupils read widely and frequently and this is further supported by parents and carers at home.
- Senior leaders are working effectively to ensure teaching continues to improve.
- Pupils at risk of falling behind in their learning are well supported through small-group work and one-to-one tuition.
- Progress in writing has improved in all key stages. Most pupils are now making the expected levels of progress and some are exceeding these.
- Pupils enjoy being part of their school community. Pupils' behaviour is good both in and around the school. They listen attentively in class and enjoy their learning.
- Pupils feel valued as individuals and there is a positive ethos of caring and sharing which permeates the school. They feel safe and valued and work and play well together.
- Good leadership from the head teacher and the governing body have improved teaching since the last inspection and standards have risen in English and mathematics.
- The school works successfully in partnership with parents and carers, who support their children's learning well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Even though teaching is good overall there are too few lessons which are outstanding.
- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve to ensure their learning moves forward fast enough.
- Pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to guide their own learning activities and to work independently.
- Occasionally support staff are not used sufficiently well to assist with learning during whole-class teaching.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed substantial parts of 17 lessons, of which three were joint observations with the headteacher. Additional visits were made to lessons to observe reading sessions and see how individual pupils were supported with their learning.
- Meetings were held with staff, two groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.
- A number of children from Year 2 to Year 6 read to inspectors.
- Examples of pupils' work in their books, their learning journals and classroom displays were examined.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 33 parents and carers from the on-line website (Parent View) as well as all written communication received during the inspection. The views of the 17 staff members who completed the staff questionnaire were also considered.

Inspection team

Judith O'Hare, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Andrew Wibroe

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Our Lady is an average-sized primary school. There is also a Nursery which provides part-time education for 26 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is increasing and is well above average.
- Approximately half of the pupils at the school come from a wide range of ethnic minority backgrounds and this figure is rising.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of educational needs is also well below average, although some year groups have higher proportions of these pupils than others.
- A below average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium. This is provided to support the learning of pupils who are known to be entitled to free school meals or who are in the care of the local authority.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in Key Stages 1 and 2 so that more of it is outstanding by:
 - creating more opportunities for pupils to work and learn independently of their teachers
 - adapting plans where necessary to ensure that pupils make as much progress as they can in lessons
 - more effectively deploying additional adults to support learning in the classroom
 - ensuring that in all lessons teachers' expectations are high enough to enable all pupils to make rapid progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the school with skills which are broadly typical for children of their age. They make good progress in all areas of their learning but most especially in language and communication skills. This is as a consequence of high quality, imaginative teaching and good use of assessment to gauge their precise learning needs.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2 there has been some variance in the achievement and progress of pupils over the last three years. By the time they leave school at the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in English and mathematics has been above average, although relatively few pupils have achieved outcomes which are significantly above. Nonetheless, attainment in reading is well above average and is significantly higher than in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' progress from their starting points is better than that seen nationally. It is exceptionally and consistently better in reading but has varied over time in both writing and mathematics. This is because teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have not always been high enough.
- However, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have made consistently good progress. This is because they are given work to do which is appropriately challenging and the targeted support they receive in lessons and in small-group work helps them to develop their independent learning skills.
- Currently most groups of pupils are making more rapid and sustained progress in English and mathematics because teachers have a better idea of how they are doing now improved tracking systems are being used. This means they put programmes in place promptly to help pupils who may be falling behind.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language benefit significantly from the whole school focus on reading and achieve well. This is because the special materials they use celebrate cultural differences and encourage meaningful discussion work.
- The progress of those pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is good because the extra support they receive is precise and well focused. The money has been spent on additional teaching hours. It helps them to catch up their peers and to be more confident in what they can achieve.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching over time is good. Some outstanding teaching was also observed during the inspection in both the Nursery and in the Reception class.
- The majority of teaching is lively so that pupils enjoy their learning. Teachers use questioning well to find out what pupils know and to move them on in their learning.
- However, some teaching still requires improvement. Sometimes the tasks set are not sufficiently demanding and there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their skills independently.
- Support staff are not always effectively deployed in the classroom, especially when the teacher

is working with the whole class.

- Good assessment of pupils' progress ensures that teachers' lessons are planned appropriately to match the needs of most learners. However, occasionally this planning is not adapted in the light of pupils' experiences in lessons to ensure that they make the maximum amount of progress.
- Marking in books is detailed and helpful. Targets set to improve performance are well informed. Pupils find this marking particularly helpful and appreciate the advice they have been given. In particular, they commented on the '4 Bs before me' policy they use in class (buddy, book, brain, board).
- The school's focus on improving writing skills has resulted in some imaginative approaches to learning. Speaking and listening skills are also being well developed. In one English lesson, for example, pupils used 'freeze-frame' drama techniques to develop their character writing skills before moving on to complete an extended piece of writing. In a history lesson pupils were encouraged to discuss life in different countries during World War 2.
- Reading is exceptionally well taught throughout the school. Letters and sounds lessons (phonics) are well structured and where reading is guided, pupils progress at a significant pace. The library is very well resourced and is a hive of activity at all points of the day, including lunch times and after school.
- Pupils express their joy of reading. As one pupil noted, 'You learn so much through reading. I just love it.' Inspectors too were questioned by pupils about their reading preferences and suggestions for a good read were made.
- Good use is made of technology during lessons to enhance learning and to widen pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world. There are frequent opportunities for pupils to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, visits and trips and the uptake is high.
- Teaching promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development especially well. This was evident in every aspect of learning. For example, a mathematics lesson on division paid equal attention to the need to share things and the importance of generosity and fairness to everyone.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Our Lady is a happy and safe place where all feel welcomed and valued. Parents and carers, pupils and teachers all speak positively about the good relationships and attitudes in the school.
 - Pupils are polite and respectful to each other and to the adults who teach them. This good behaviour was observed to be a consistent feature during the inspection in lessons, around the school and in the playground.
 - Pupils take an active part in ensuring positive behaviour is maintained. For example, the playground charter was developed and is monitored by the school council.
 - In lessons pupils concentrate well and demonstrate their commitment to working hard and achieving well even when sometimes they are required to spend lengthy periods of time sitting on the carpet or listening to their teacher.
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- Attendance and punctuality are good although a small number of families continue to take extended breaks during school time. This matter is being tackled appropriately by the school.
- Pupils say they feel safe. They are aware of the different sorts of bullying and harassment including racism, homophobic and cyber bullying. They say this never happens in school and are confident should this occur the school would help. As one pupil said, 'Everyone here treats you with respect, so learning is fun.'

The leadership and management are good

- The head teacher is passionate about the school and is working effectively to ensure all pupils achieve their very best. Staff members are highly supportive. There is a shared and focused drive for improvement. Parents and carers are also positive in their responses. One said, 'I cannot find fault with this school. All pupils are treated with a great deal of respect. The school community is incredibly inclusive.'
- Teaching is improving significantly as a result of the way leaders set targets for staff and check how well the school is doing. Strengths in teaching are clearly identified but teachers are not given sufficient guidance on how to make their teaching outstanding.
- The school has made good progress in addressing all of the issues from the previous inspection. Self evaluation is accurate and is rightly focused on areas that will improve pupil outcomes. The school has good capacity to improve further.
- The curriculum is rich in content and variety. It is significantly enhanced by the wide range of additional learning opportunities which include music, the arts and French.
- Leaders and managers give a high priority to promoting pupils' behaviour and safety. This is reflected in the way pupils conduct themselves in and around the school. The school ensures all pupils are treated equally and that discrimination is not tolerated. It fosters good relations with parents and carers and with other agencies. All safeguarding requirements are met.
- The local authority provides light-touch effective support to this good school. For example, valuable support and guidance have been given on how to improve outcomes in writing and have led to improvements in pupils' progress.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors are diligent in the way they fulfil their statutory duties including the safe recruiting and vetting of staff. They hold senior leaders fully to account for all aspects of school improvement, for example, in ensuring those pupils known to be entitled to the pupil premium receive the help they need. Sound financial planning and management is evidenced in the recent refurbishment of the playground areas and the redesigned outdoor learning area for the Early Years Foundation Stage which has resulted in better and more imaginative teaching. Governors know about the quality of teaching and how performance management is used to recognise and reward good teachers and bring all teaching up to a high standard. Governors understand school data and how the school performs in comparison with other schools. The governing body ensures that it receives high quality training so that it can develop its

effectiveness further.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	117464
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	401666

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided School
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paraic McKenna
Headteacher	Catherine Corr
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2009
Telephone number	01707 324408
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