

Our Lady's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103449
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	308324
Inspection dates	21–22 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Canham

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Lacy
Headteacher	Damian Ward
Date of previous school inspection	24 November 2003
School address	East Meadway Tile Cross Birmingham B33 0AU
Telephone number	01214 644459
Fax number	01214 642939

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	21–22 May 2008
Inspection number	308324

© 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 two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Most of the pupils at Our Lady's Catholic Primary School are from families of White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average and the number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is growing. The proportion of pupils identified as eligible for free school meals is above average whilst those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to that found nationally.

The deputy headteacher held the temporary post of headteacher for two terms before the current headteacher joined the school in April 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Following recent changes to the senior leadership and management team, leadership has been strengthened and as a result, the school is 'turning a corner' and the pace of improvement is accelerating. The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide the school with a strong lead and determination to raise standards. The governors' monitoring has also taken a boost because they have access to accurate information and benefit from good levels of communication to help them find out how well the school is performing. Subject leaders have a much improved understanding of their roles, but some have yet to become involved in helping to identify and prioritise key areas for the school's development. A number of initiatives have been introduced in mathematics, which have already led to improvements to pupils' performance in this subject. A number of other initiatives have been made in literacy and science, although the full impact of these has yet to be seen in the progress made by pupils. Pupils have positive attitudes to school and say that 'teachers give you praise and respect'. They talk proudly of their achievements and say that they have a lot of fun in school. These factors make an important contribution to their progress, particularly in well taught lessons, although they have yet to have a full impact on raising standards.

Standards are broadly average. Children start the Foundation Stage with a much narrower range of knowledge and skills than is usual for their age especially in language development, aspects of mathematics, and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. These children make good progress and reach average standards by the end of Reception. Achievement is satisfactory in Key Stages 1 and 2, with good progress in mathematics, and in several classes. Pupils with English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because of the close support they receive. This picture of satisfactory, although inconsistent achievement, reflects the variation in the quality of teaching, which is also satisfactory with good elements. Some lessons are well planned, capture pupils' interest and motivate them with stimulating activities. Progress is sometimes good in lessons, but not consistently so. Assessment is not always used well enough to plan activities that match the capabilities of all pupils. On occasions, not all pupils are involved because the pace is slow and activities do not push them far enough, particularly those who are more able.

The good care, guidance and support provided for all pupils are underpinned securely by the school's strong Catholic ethos. These features have a positive impact on pupils' good personal development, which is seen in their mature approach and good behaviour. Parents also report that their children are happy at school and that any concerns are addressed promptly. Pupils are aware of the need to eat healthily, although some pupils still do not choose healthy options.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

There is a positive learning atmosphere in Reception, where children make a good start to their learning. Teaching is good and children achieve well from a below average base to reach broadly average standards. The well planned curriculum includes a good mixture of teacher-led tasks alongside opportunities for children to explore and investigate for themselves, so gaining confidence in their own abilities. These strategies successfully promote children's personal and social development and their interest in learning. Children's attitudes to work are good and they delight in organising themselves and showing what they can do. Those within the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language are supported well and helped

to play a full part in all activities. Close monitoring of how children are learning ensures that activities build positively on what they already know and can do. Targets for the next stages of learning are shared with parents so they too can support their children's progress. Leadership of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Opportunities to develop an outside area have not been taken but this is about to change with plans to extend the opportunities for independent choices in a secure outside classroom area.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of assessment to increase challenge and ensure that all teaching is consistently good.
- Ensure that subject leaders are fully involved in monitoring and evaluating standards, and that they lead developments in their areas of responsibility to improve the school's work and performance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The rise in results in 2007 indicate satisfactory progress and an arrest in a steady decline during the previous three years. This improvement has been largely sustained in the current school year. All groups now achieve satisfactorily, including pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language. During lessons, progress is sometimes good, but not often enough to lift achievement further. It is too early for improvements to have had a full impact on standards, which are broadly average in the current Years 2 and 6. Priorities for the school are to ensure that more able pupils reach the higher levels, particularly in science, and that the discrepancy between the performance of boys and girls is reduced in Key Stage 2. However, both groups were seen to make similar gains in lessons during the inspection. While progress in science is satisfactory, it has not improved to the same levels as those in English and mathematics and the school is now tackling this issue through a greater focus on scientific investigation.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils say that 'they like school because it is fun'. Their ready enjoyment of school life is illustrated in their friendly, caring and supportive approach towards each other, which helps to make the school a safe and welcoming place. Attendance is average. Pupils gain a good awareness of their own beliefs and show respect for each other's ideas in lessons. Staff provide good role models and there is a strong ethos of care and support for each other. Pupils are well aware of the benefits of being active, and many enjoy the after school sports clubs. Pupils' good behaviour ensures that lessons are orderly and productive, although pupils are inclined to talk when the pace of activities is slow. Pupils work well in groups and help each other when they are stuck. They take responsibilities willingly and carry them out seriously. Pupils say that the school council 'helps to make the school a better place' and gives them the opportunity to raise money for a charity of their choice. Pupils' strong personal skills are valuable assets for the future, while improving skills in literacy and numeracy provide a sound basis for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall, but there is evidence of good teaching in some classes. The school is determined to overcome inconsistencies to ensure that pupils progress well. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to provide well focused support for small groups. The activities are largely challenging for the majority of pupils. The degree to which pupils show interest and attention indicates that activities build well on past learning and are generally appropriate to their needs. For example, pupils are engrossed when introductions are memorable and discussions move on at a rapid pace. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to vary the content of questions to different ability groups or to give the more able demanding tasks early in the lesson. Occasionally, introductions are too long and the choice of tasks does not allow pupils enough opportunity to exercise independent choice or to use their own initiative.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum strikes a sound balance between subjects, with a satisfactory focus on literacy and numeracy and the development of pupils' performance skills in subjects such as physical education and music. The school is making concerted efforts to ensure that basic skills of literacy are consolidated in other subjects, such as religious education and drama, and in other activities that promote pupils' speaking skills. Information and communication technology is used increasingly to support learning in many other subjects. The school makes good use of visits and visitors to enrich the pupils' experiences and extend their learning. Pupils think that the wide range of extra-curricular activities are good and name athletics and football among those they most enjoy. The school recognises that, although there are many positive additional activities, not all pupils' learning needs are fully met. The school is providing a greater focus on learning experiences that will motivate girls and lift their aspirations, but these activities are not yet addressing their lower standards compared to those of the boys. The school knows it still has more to do to boost pupils' writing and scientific skills with a greater focus on independent working. The provision for pupils with English as an additional language is still being developed. It is good in the Reception class, but inconsistent throughout the rest of the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

As one parent wrote, 'I feel that the staff always put the children's needs first.' Staff know pupils well and provide good personal support and pastoral care, which contribute substantially to the school's friendly and caring atmosphere. The Catholic ethos pervades the school's work and gives rise to very good relationships between pupils and staff, and amongst the pupils. Successful subject workshops, which involve parents and their children in working together during part of the school day, help parents to have a greater understanding of how they can support their children. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good quality care and attention, particularly through the help of support staff, who make effective use of detailed individual education plans. Arrangements to safeguard and protect pupils are comprehensive. Most pupils have good attendance and the school is taking steps to reduce the number of holidays taken by a few families in term time. Academic guidance is much

improved. The use of graduated learning targets and guidance on what pupils need to do to improve are beginning to build pupils' knowledge and skills. In most cases, pupils know what they are doing and how to do it. Teachers' marking also enables pupils to understand how well they are working, but these positive ways of working are still new and not yet used consistently.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Parents, staff, governors and pupils comment on the significant changes that have been introduced since the new senior leadership team was established. As one parent wrote, 'I have 100% confidence in the leadership.' Together, the headteacher and deputy headteacher provide the school with a very clear sense of direction. Their perceptive analysis of the school's strengths and areas for development has led to initiatives with a strong focus on raising achievement and standards. The school's accurate self-evaluation is based on observations of teaching and learning, a scrutiny of the quality and range of pupils' work, and a thorough review of school procedures. The school is securely placed to bring about improvement, although the role of subject leaders has yet to be fully developed and the capacity for moving the school forward is therefore satisfactory. These leaders have yet to play a major part in evaluating the school's work through observing the teaching of others and by systematically analysing the quality and range of pupils' work.

Governors have developed a better understanding of their role and have become a source of challenge and support. With the help of improved communication and access to detailed information, governors have a closer working relationship with the school.

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	2
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	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
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	3
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?	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?	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	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

23 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Our Lady's Catholic Primary School, Birmingham, B33 0AU

We very much enjoyed our visit to your school and thank you for making us feel so welcome. This letter is to tell you about some of the things we found out while we were with you. Our Lady's is a satisfactory school where staff are working hard to help you make faster progress. We were pleased to hear that you like your school, especially all the clubs; breakfast club and sports activities seem to be very popular. The large majority of your parents are happy with the school, too. You behave well and get on with each other and this means that everyone can concentrate on their learning. Your progress as a whole is satisfactory, although some of you have made good progress this year, and you reach standards expected for your age. Here are some important things about your school

- Those of you in Reception make a good start, including those learning to speak English for the first time.
- You enjoy your lessons and work hard when activities are interesting and you all have a chance to take part in discussions and answer questions.
- The new headteacher and other staff are making lots of improvements and these are helping you to make faster progress.
- In some lessons you are well taught, but this is not always the case and you could be challenged to do even better.
- All staff take good care of you, and make sure that you know what to do to keep safe.
- You have a good understanding of what makes for a healthy lifestyle, but some of you choose not to eat healthy options at lunchtime and at break.

This is what your school has been asked to do to make things even better

- The school should make sure that teaching always challenges you to do your very best, so that you always make good progress.
- The school should ensure that those members of staff who look after each subject check how well you are doing so that they can help you do even better.

Yours sincerely

Paul Canham Lead inspector