

Our Lady's RC Primary School

Wigan

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106490
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	309144
Inspection dates	10–11 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Ann Welch

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 on roll	
School	172
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Fr Kevin Foulkes
Headteacher	Mr E Fogg
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2004
School address	Holly Road Aspull Wigan Lancashire WN2 1RU
Telephone number	01942 832299
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is smaller than average. It attracts pupils from a wide, semi-rural area situated between Wigan and Bolton. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal is below that nationally. The number of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. The school has a number of accreditations including the Healthy School and Activemark Gold awards and has achieved permanent Eco status in 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Some aspects of its work are outstanding, including the provision for pupils' personal development and well-being. Pupils' excellent attendance is testimony to their impressive attitudes to work and the enjoyment they gain from being in school. Parents are understandably pleased with the quality of education provided for their children. 'The whole atmosphere in school is calm and relaxed, the children are always smiling so as a parent I feel this speaks for itself,' is a sentiment reflected by many parents.

Children enter school with skills and knowledge similar to national expectations. They achieve well as they progress through school. Standards achieved in the 2007 tests were broadly average for pupils at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. These were not as high as in recent years when they were consistently above average. This decline in standards, following a period of instability due to staffing difficulties, has been halted. Rigorous assessment and tracking of progress, improved teaching skills and a strengthened curriculum have meant that pupils' progress has picked up again this year, especially in mathematics. The school's records of pupils' progress and pupils' exercise books show that most are making good progress and are on track to meet challenging targets. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit well from the additional support they receive because it is specifically targeted to meet their individual needs. The good quality of teaching and learning ensures that most lessons are purposeful and fun. Effective teaching is typified by searching questions that encourage pupils to think about and explain their answers.

Care, guidance and support are good overall. Pastoral care is outstanding. Strong guidance for their personal well-being and warm relationships have a major impact on pupils' overall personal development. Teachers share learning targets, now of a much more challenging nature, with pupils and ensure that they have sufficient guidance about what they need to do to improve. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are adamant that bullying and racism are practically non-existent in school. They feel secure in the knowledge that they can rely on adults to look after them. The support assistant, who has particular expertise in managing behaviour, has a very positive effect on those pupils who find conforming more difficult and helps them to handle their emotions well. These pupils typically comment that 'Working in the Rainbow Room helps us to try things we haven't done before and to cope better with school life.' The 'buddy' system which pairs youngest and oldest pupils builds caring friendships and mutual understanding and respect. Such relationships help pupils to develop into thoughtful and reliable young people and contribute very strongly to their outstanding personal development and well-being. The curriculum is good. The breadth of pupils' learning is enhanced by the outstanding range and quality of enrichment activities. Pupils talk with much enthusiasm about their residential trips, after-school clubs, performances and visits to art galleries and museums. The curriculum ensures that they become increasingly responsible for their own safety, both inside and outside school, and know how to keep fit and healthy. It does not, however, fully challenge those pupils who are identified as having special gifts or talents. They do not have enough opportunities in their wider curriculum to pursue their particular talents.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is an impressive leader who provides clear direction for the school and inspires others to follow. He is supported very well by the deputy headteacher and senior leadership team. The school acknowledges the need to share decision making more widely and for subject leaders to become increasingly accountable for pupils' standards and achievement and the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility.

Effective checks on the school's performance enable it to determine how well it is doing and to guide improvement. Governance is good. Governors bring a variety of skills and keep a close watch on how well the school is doing. Reflecting its many strengths, the school provides good value for money and has a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Parents find the opportunities to visit during the term prior to their children entering Reception really help children to adjust very well to such an important change in their lives. The levels of development on entry are broadly within the range expected for children of this age. Children make good progress and most are on course to meet or exceed the levels expected when they start Year 1. Their progress in the areas of communication, language and literacy, and personal, social and emotional development is particularly good because teaching of these aspects is included in all activities. Teaching is good with a lively approach that keeps children motivated and eager to learn. The opportunities to learn through play are enhanced by the good quality resources and highly imaginative role play. However, better use could be made of the outdoor area to extend children's independent learning opportunities. Relationships are excellent. Children's confidence and self-esteem improve rapidly because all staff value them as individuals and listen to their ideas. They are cared for extremely well and their development is thoroughly assessed and recorded. They are well prepared for starting the Year 1 curriculum. Leadership and management are good. Effective delegation ensures that all the staff's skills are put to best use.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase middle managers' accountability for checking on the quality of teaching and learning and for pupils' standards and achievement.
- Improve provision for gifted and talented pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter Year 1 with levels of development that meet or exceed the levels expected for children of their age. The apparent dip in standards in Key Stage 1 in 2006 and 2007 was the result of assessments in those years being too stringent and not reflecting the true ability of pupils, particularly that of the more able pupils. Boys have not performed as well as girls, particularly in writing. More opportunities to write, together with a focus on helping pupils to apply their writing skills in other subjects has had a positive impact on standards and achievement, especially those of boys. In addition, more pupils are on track to reach the higher levels in writing. The decline in standards in Key Stage 2 in 2007, particularly in mathematics, followed a period of instability due to staffing difficulties. Recent effective initiatives, including the deputy headteacher taking on the role of mathematics coordinator, have ensured that most pupils in the current Year 6 class are achieving well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same good progress as other pupils because of the effective support they receive in class and in small groups. Achievement for pupils with special gifts and talents is satisfactory because they are not fully challenged in the areas where their particular talents lie.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils really enjoy coming to school. They are very polite and well mannered, and very keen to help others. The quality of relationships between staff and pupils is perhaps best summed up by the comment, 'Our teachers are very kind, they listen to us and always take us seriously.' Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school's inclusive and caring ethos is at the heart of promoting pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Receiving an award at assembly time is particularly coveted. 'You have a good feeling about yourself because the whole school knows how well you have done,' is a typical comment. Pupils work together very well in lessons. Older pupils are aware that they are role models for the younger pupils and they take this aspect of school life very seriously. Visitors during 'Faith Weeks' share their expertise and beliefs with pupils so that they are fully aware of the richness of cultures and religions different from their own.

The school council is influential. Members are proud of their fund-raising activities which helped to purchase equipment to make playtimes more enjoyable. Pupils understand that sensible diets and plenty of exercise are the best options to follow and are always keen to join in the excellent range of sporting activities provided. Their strong links with the church and local parish ensure that they learn the important skills needed to be part of a community. Year 6 'Business Enterprise' studies prepare them well to make informed choices about their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers plan lessons well because they have good subject knowledge. They share learning objectives clearly with pupils so that everyone knows what is expected of them. Teachers use resources effectively, especially interactive whiteboards, to engage pupils in learning and to promote their interest and challenge. Varied practical activities and excellent relationships ensure that pupils behave very well and enjoy their work. A good example was observed in a design and technology lesson where pupils' knowledge of circuits was tested when they had to design an alarm system. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are promoted as they generate ideas with their partners. Their confidence is boosted when they share their strategies with the class. They know that teachers value their contributions and misunderstandings are cleared up without any loss of self-esteem. Teaching is less effective when the pace slows and pupils' concentration begins to flag. In some lessons, the opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own and each other's learning are too rushed giving them little time to reflect on their performance.

Teaching assistants are valued members of the team. They are well briefed and this enables them to provide effective support for groups and individuals.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There is an appropriate emphasis on teaching the basic skills of English, mathematics and science. Improvements in resources for information and communication technology (ICT) have strengthened links between subjects. A good example was seen during a literacy lesson when

pupils used their ICT, literacy and history skills to prepare a brochure for a museum. The curriculum is enhanced by the inclusion of Spanish and French for Key Stage 2 pupils. However, there are not enough opportunities for enrichment activities for pupils who have special gifts and talents. The strong emphasis on physical education has earned the school an Activemark Gold award which complements its Healthy School award. Excellent provision for personal, social and health education helps pupils to make informed choices about their personal well-being. The school is understandably proud of its permanent Eco status. Pupils are in the throes of planning the latest initiative, a 'green' day, in conjunction with the church and local community. The wealth of visits, including a residential, and visitors, together with the good variety and number of extra-curricular clubs, make school life a rich experience.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

At every level, high quality relationships give pupils the confidence to try new things and to enjoy their learning. The most vulnerable are extremely well cared for, whatever their additional needs, so that they can enjoy their learning alongside others. Pupils trust adults to look after them and to sort out any anxieties that they may have. The guidance pupils receive to help them with their learning is good. Teachers' marking is supportive and generally gives clear guidance. Recent improvements in the way in which pupils' progress is tracked are already leading to better achievement. Parents' views are very positive. The daily presence of the headteacher and other members of staff to welcome pupils into school and deal with day-to-day minor issues is very much appreciated by pupils and parents. The school meets all current safeguarding requirements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher sets the tone for the school. He is thorough and resolute and very caring and approachable. Hard decisions have had to be taken to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to cope with staff changes. The headteacher and senior leadership team already have a good track record at making improvements, including strengthening the systems for tracking pupils' progress, improving writing in Key Stage 1, mathematics in Key Stage 2 and provision for the most vulnerable pupils. There are ambitious plans for future improvement and challenging targets have been set. The school improvement plan is a good guide for staff and governors when gauging the overall performance of the school. Professional development is given a high priority. Through staff training, some improvements have been made to the way middle managers track and evaluate the effectiveness of their areas of responsibility. However, the school acknowledges that there is still room for improvement. The governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They are very supportive and they know the school's strengths and areas to develop. Leaders are effective in developing and maintaining good relationships with local schools, organisations and agencies that contribute to pupils' outstanding personal development and good achievements.

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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	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Our Lady's RC Primary School Wigan, WN2 1RU

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. It was helpful to hear your views about your work and the many interesting things that happen at school. Overall, we judged your school to be good and we identified some things that were outstanding. We were pleased to find that your attendance is excellent and we hope that you will keep that up.

You are polite and courteous and your behaviour is first class. We were very impressed by your positive attitudes to learning and these are helping you to succeed. It was great to see so many smiling faces amongst the children and the adults. You know how to keep healthy and we noticed that many of you enjoy the fruit and salad at lunchtime, although we did spot some crisps and biscuits in your lunchboxes.

We saw that all the adults work really hard to make sure you feel happy and safe at school. They take extremely good care of you just as you care for each other. Your teachers are skilful at planning interesting lessons for you. One of you told us, 'Our lessons are fun but we are still learning'. We agree wholeheartedly with that sentiment.

Your headteacher does a very good job of leading and managing your school. The deputy headteacher and all the teachers play their part in making the school run smoothly. One of the reasons for our visit was to see how your school could improve. As a result, your headteacher will now ask the leaders of each subject to check how well you are doing in their particular area. Also, we have asked teachers to think of more ways of helping those of you who have special talents to make the best possible progress.

We hope that you continue to enjoy school and to do well with your work.