

Guardian Angels Catholic Primary School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	103420
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323820
Inspection dates	5–6 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Paul Canham

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	213
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Conley
Headteacher	Catherine Naughton
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hurst Lane Shard End Birmingham B34 7HN

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	5–6 March 2009
Inspection number	323820

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Amended Report Addendum

Report amended due to factual inaccuracy

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The large majority of pupils are from families of White British heritage. Other pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. Children of Early Years Foundation Stage age are taught in a Reception class. There is a pre-school care provision within the school grounds, but this is not managed by the governors.

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 where pupils achieve well. The headteacher's sheer determination has been the key factor in driving the school forward. With effective support from a recently established leadership team, the school has focused successfully on raising standards and improving the learning environment. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and is underpinned by increasingly rigorous assessment and review. Governors share the school's expectations and the hard work of leaders and other staff is paying off. Pupils' good achievement is the result of stimulating teaching and a flexible curriculum that interests and engages them. However, the school is still overcoming inconsistencies from the recent past where there was variation in achievement and academic performance, including a dip last year, from which it is recovering.

The leadership's clear vision is not only focused on improvement in performance, but also on ensuring the highest possible quality of care for its pupils. For example, innovative strategies to improve attendance have had a positive impact and it is now above average. The school successfully nurtures an ethos of self-esteem and respect for others, which is central to its happy learning community. Consequently, pupils have outstanding attitudes to school and behaviour is exemplary. Pupils work exceptionally well in pairs and independently. These strong features have a positive influence on pupils' progress and excellent personal development and well-being. The school is becoming increasingly popular with parents, who hold the school in high regard. Many commented on the friendly and approachable staff who are always on hand to deal with concerns and anxieties. One parent's comment sums up the views of many: 'The school team is very friendly, caring and well organised. The children's and parents' needs are catered for while delivering a wide and varied curriculum.'

Achievement is good and Year 6 pupils this year are predicted to reach average standards and to meet the school's challenging targets set for English and mathematics. Children start in the Reception class with a much narrower range of knowledge and skills than is usual for their age. They make good progress, particularly in personal, social and emotional development, and this continues in later years. The school's focus on weaknesses in the pupils' ability to understand what they are reading, problem solving, and interpreting information from science investigations has already led to improvements. Progress in lessons is good and this picture reflects the quality of teaching. Comprehensive assessment procedures underpin the successful teaching, which typically captures pupils' interests and motivates them with stimulating activities. However, on occasion, introductions are rather long and more able pupils are not stretched early enough in lessons. Tailored support ensures that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress in line with their peers.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that assessment information is used effectively to identify individual needs. Close monitoring means that adults have a clear picture of each child's stage of learning and that activities build positively on what they already know and can do.

Children relish the positive and highly supportive atmosphere in the Reception class. From low starting points, children make good progress and achieve well in all areas of learning, reaching below average standards by the end of the Reception Year. The good start to their learning

reflects the good teaching. Children make particularly rapid progress in their personal, social and emotional development. They listen carefully and talk confidently to adults and to each other because the school has helped them to develop strong and trusting relationships.

Children have a good understanding of right and wrong and enjoy the security of being in a consistently fair and supportive environment. As a result, they rise to the expectations set for them and follow the guidance they are given. They also apply themselves enthusiastically to the learning opportunities they are offered and consequently make good progress. When given the opportunity, children show that they are able to make decisions about their own learning and reflect independently on their achievements. However, the school recognises the need to give children earlier opportunities to make choices and take control of their own learning, including the exploration of ideas over extended periods of time.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that planning for the Early Years Foundation Stage provides sufficient opportunities for children to make choices and explore ideas earlier in the school year.
- Ensure that teaching consistently challenges the more able pupils in all parts of the lesson.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are broadly average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. This picture represents good achievement. In 2008, the Year 6 results dipped to below average. Although this group had a higher than usual proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, they made satisfactory rather than good progress. In addition, a significant proportion of pupils joined that year group at different times during Key Stage 2.

Focused work on identified weaknesses has led to improvements and the majority of pupils are making good progress as they move up from the start of Year 1 to the end of Year 6. Pupils in Year 6 are on course to meet their expected targets, which include a raising of expectations in all subjects. Consequently, the school is expected to exceed its targets in English and match them in mathematics for 2009.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from good support which ensures their good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils say that they like coming to school because they feel very safe and teachers make learning fun. One parent commented, 'It is very reassuring as a parent to see my son run into school every day because he is really looking forward to his lessons.'

Pupils' personal qualities reflect the exceptional support for their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Respect and consideration for each other are at the core of the school's work. These strengths underpin the impeccable behaviour and caring approach taken by pupils who get on extremely well with each other. A striking feature is the harmonious relationships among pupils from different backgrounds. Pupils show enjoyment in their eagerness to get to school and start the day. For example, almost half the pupils arrive early to take part in the breakfast club. Take up of other out-of-school activities is also very good. Pupils

appreciate the importance of healthy lifestyles and their attitudes and efforts are recognised by the Healthy School award and Activemark award for sport.

The school council provides pupils with very good opportunities to represent the views of others and help the school make decisions regarding, for example, improvements to lunchtime arrangements. Pupils also make significant contributions to the wider community through raising funds for local, national and international charities. Older pupils are keen to carry out duties and are extremely considerate of younger pupils during breaktimes. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe in school and outside. Pupils' strong personal skills are beneficial qualities for the future, and their improving skills in literacy, numeracy and business enterprise provide a good basis for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The collaborative approach taken by staff and their very good working relationships are key factors to the successful teaching. Teachers and their assistants, working effectively within teams, provide well focused support for small groups. Typically, pupils benefit from a brisk pace in lessons and well honed tasks that are mostly matched to their stages of learning. On occasion, pupils make exceptionally good gains in their learning as a result of memorable activities that capture their imagination during cross-curricular activities. However, occasionally, introductions are too long and teachers do not take sufficient account of the pupils' different starting points, particularly the more able.

The very effective use of learning targets and success criteria extends pupils' knowledge and skills and involves them in learning. Teachers use marking extremely effectively to provide pointers for improvement. In lessons, pupils can explain their tasks with confidence and how they are going to improve. Pupils work very well together in pairs and groups and willingly share their findings. Good use is made of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The flexible curriculum provides a good balance between a focus on literacy and numeracy, and the development of pupils' performance skills in subjects such as physical education and music. The teaching of French adds a further dimension. However, the school knows it has to lift aspects of pupils' English, mathematics and scientific skills and, with the help of revised curricular planning, this is now happening. For example, to overcome weaknesses in science, the school is giving pupils more first-hand experience through practical work. To enhance investigations in mathematics, a project involving the drawing up of a business plan to help generate profit for charity, is driving home the importance of numeracy skills. Effective links between subjects successfully reinforce pupils' learning.

Provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is a very strong feature of the curriculum. The very good range of after school clubs is much enjoyed by pupils. The school makes very effective use of visits and visitors to enrich pupils' experiences and extend their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The caring ethos provides an extremely strong foundation for the school's work and gives rise to excellent relationships between pupils and staff, and amongst the pupils. Parents appreciate the support given when they have concerns and the excellent care provided for their children. Every step is taken to ensure pupils feel valued and respected as individuals. As a parent wrote, 'I know that if my children are ever unsure or unhappy with something the staff and children at Guardian Angels are always there to help.'

Arrangements to safeguard and protect pupils are firmly established. With the help of staff and outside agencies, who liaise between school and families, the school has successfully raised attendance. Staff know the pupils exceptionally well and academic guidance is outstanding. Comprehensive assessment procedures provide the school with very detailed information on each pupil's stage of learning. Pupils are involved in their own assessments and understand how they can improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The resolve of the headteacher has proved to be the key component in the school's rapid improvement. With the help of the new leadership team, she has developed a clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. This view is based on lesson observations and a close scrutiny of all aspects the school's work. Some key leaders are new and their roles are not yet fully developed, although they are beginning to have an impact on raising standards.

Strategic planning is good and self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate. As a result, the school is well placed to bring about improvement. Governors are closely involved in the life and work of the school and have a good understanding of its performance. The school has excellent links with parents who are encouraged to take a full part in their children's learning and pupils are consulted about their views. Parents are almost unanimous in their praise for the school. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good. The needs of the local community are understood well and met by providing social events and other activities that bring the community together. The school is actively engaged in promoting links with schools and agencies in other countries, including France, India and Thailand.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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 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?	1

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

9 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Guardian Angels Catholic Primary School, Birmingham B34 7HN

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 while we were with you. Importantly, yours is a good school, where staff are really working hard to make it even better. We were pleased to hear that you like your school. Almost all of your parents are very happy with the school, too. You behave very well and get on with each other extremely well. Here are some important things about your school.

- Those of you in the Reception class make a good start.
- You all make good progress and enjoy lessons throughout the school, because most of them are lively and interesting.
- You feel very safe and secure in school and enjoy being there.
- Staff and governors have made lots of improvements that have helped you to make good progress.
- All staff take exceptionally 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.

This is what we have asked your school to do to make things even better.

- Help those of you in the Reception class to make choices and try out your ideas earlier than you do at present.
- Make sure that teaching always challenges those of you who learn quickly.

You can help by continuing to work hard in lessons. We wish each one of you every success in your future education.

Yours faithfully

Paul Canham

Lead inspector