

St Ursula's Catholic Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102333
Local Authority	Havering
Inspection number	355175
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Michael Bartleman

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	237
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul McGeary
Headteacher	Noel McNab
Date of previous school inspection	3 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited a class assembly and observed teaching and learning in sixteen lessons, observing nine teachers. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the data the school has collected on pupils' attainment and progress, procedures for keeping pupils safe and the school development plan. Inspectors analysed 114 questionnaires completed by parents and carers and a sample from staff and pupils.

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

- The effectiveness of the quality of teaching and assessment in promoting learning and good progress for all pupils.
- The effectiveness of the governing body, leaders and managers at all levels in tackling areas for improvement and taking decisive action to improve provision.
- Any outstanding features of provision for personal development and how these have an impact on pupils' outcomes.
- To what extent the Early Years Foundation Stage is preparing children well for their later education.

Information about the school

St Ursula's Catholic Infant School is an average-sized infant school. It serves the local area, with few pupils coming from outside the immediate area. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is similar to that found in other schools nationally. Approximately half of the pupils are from a White British background, with an equal number from minority ethnic groups. The school has eight classes, four of which are for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is a before- and after-school club managed by the governing body. The school has achieved the Healthy School award.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Ursula's provides its pupils with a good education, a view which is endorsed almost unanimously by parents and carers. Under the good leadership of the headteacher, an effective staff team has been developed, with consistently high expectations of all pupils. There are clear signs of improvement taking place since the previous inspection and there are now a number of outstanding features, including the pupils' excellent knowledge of healthy living and safety, their contribution to the community and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Parents and carers appreciate the school's approach to education, with one writing, 'The nurturing ethos, together with creative and good teaching, has meant that our child has thrived in his social, emotional and academic development'. Leaders at all levels are making a good contribution to school improvement. The governing body is well informed, supportive and influential in its role. It is fully involved in self-evaluation and has an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Alongside the headteacher, it provides good leadership and management. Together with the progress made since the previous inspection, this means the school has good capacity to sustain improvement.

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and progress well. There is a broad range of activities on offer to children, although there are some inconsistencies in how assessment information is used to plan the next steps in learning. Current work shows attainment in Year 2 is broadly at the national average. Pupils' attainment and progress are stronger in reading than in writing and mathematics. This is because of the school's effective programme for the teaching of reading and through linking sounds and letters. Given their starting points, this constitutes good progress for pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and those belonging to minority ethnic groups

Teaching is good overall. Pupils benefit from very positive relationships with their teachers in lessons. Questioning challenges pupils, but there are inconsistencies between teachers in the extent to which they focus on learning, challenge individual pupils or develop pupils' independent skills which affects the pace of learning. The school's developing creative curriculum interests pupils well and gives many opportunities for writing with a real purpose, which adds to enjoyment. Pupils' behaviour is good. In a few lessons in which pace slows, their concentration wanes and restlessness occurs. Teaching assistants are very well deployed, often dealing with a number of groups of pupils or individuals during one lesson. This approach reflects the well-managed and effective arrangements to support pupils with additional needs.

Links with parents and carers are outstanding. The school is highly inclusive and all pupils are treated equally and make a substantial contribution to aid the smooth running and improvement of their school. Outstanding care, guidance and support for pupils and their

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families are key factors in the school's success and contribute strongly to pupils' exceptional personal development. Considering their age, pupils have extensive knowledge of how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. Attendance is now above average, having improved well in recent years due to the highly successful work of the home-school support worker and external agencies. Pupils' positive views of, and pride in, their school are reflected in their commitment and enjoyment of school. They are well prepared for the next stage of their learning at junior school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise attainment and accelerate the pace of learning in writing and mathematics by:
 - making sure that pupils know the focus of learning in every lesson
 - ensuring that lesson planning consistently challenges all pupils, particularly the more able
 - enabling pupils to develop independent learning skills.
- By January 2012, enhance the provision and outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - improving the use of assessment information to plan children's next steps in learning
 - developing the coordinator's role in monitoring and evaluating the provision in the Reception and Nursery classes.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils at St Ursula's enjoy school greatly and are enthusiastic about all aspects of their learning. When children enter the school, their knowledge and skills are below those typical for their age, particularly in their skills in communication, literacy and language. The progress made by all groups of pupils, including the more able and those who speak English as an additional language, is good. By the time they leave in Year 2, attainment is average due to the good quality teaching they receive, although fewer pupils are reaching the higher levels in mathematics and writing. In a Year 1 mathematics lesson, the pupils' knowledge of odd and even numbers was challenged well through games and good interaction with the teacher's questioning. The well-planned lesson proceeded at a rapid pace, challenged all pupils and ensured good development of skills. A previous gap between Year 2 boys and girls in literacy in 2010 has been tackled well, with the gap reducing in the present year group. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress due to a range of highly-tailored support programmes. These are exceptionally well delivered by teachers, support staff and outside agencies.

The pupils feel extremely safe. Parents and carers are also confident that their children are very safe and enjoy school. Pupils have an excellent knowledge and understanding of what it means to eat healthily and they participate enthusiastically in the wide range of extra-curricular activities which are much enjoyed by pupils; this is reflected in St Ursula's Healthy School Status. The school council offers the chance for pupils to exercise leadership roles within the school community, to actively support charities and to

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participate in 'pupil voice' conferences with other schools. Pupils contribute well to the school as playground monitors and buddies for younger children, and to the local community through their cultural and inter-school activities. They are taking a lead in developing material recycling across the school. Pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is clearly evident in lessons and assemblies in the way they appreciate 'the arts' and music, and through the mature way in which they relate to, and communicate with, other children and with adults, including visitors to the school. For their age, they have a clear appreciation of religious and cultural diversity within the local area.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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?

Teachers usually plan lessons well to ensure that there are opportunities for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to learn in ways that suit them best. For example, in an effective Year 2 English lesson, the teacher skilfully used visual prompts, clear questioning, and active involvement of pupils through partner discussion or writing on whiteboards. This helped pupils work rapidly and make excellent gains in their ability to use letter sounds. The well-structured reading programme throughout the school has been especially beneficial to pupils, many of whom started school with particularly weak language skills.

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Teachers regularly assess pupils and have a clear insight into the performance of all individuals. In the main, they use this information well to ensure activities in lessons match the needs of different groups of pupils. Most lessons across the school are well taught. In the few satisfactory lessons seen, teaching was less effective because the activities provided did not match the needs of the pupils as well as they should. In these sessions, the pace of work was occasionally too slow so that pupils, particularly the more able, began to lose interest and become restless. The good curriculum provides a range of stimulating topics which promote pupils' enjoyment and contributes to good achievement levels. Extended writing skills are well developed through, for example, writing a mini-beast fact card and recounts following a visit to a sea-life centre. Themed weeks focusing on mathematics, health and books, and multicultural events celebrating diversity add to enjoyment and engage the whole school community well. There are numerous trips and visits in the local area. Out-of-school-hours provision, including the before- and after-school club, is wide-ranging and of good quality. This was seen during the inspection when pupils from a local secondary school worked well with Year 2 pupils as part of their sports leader awards.

Staff have an excellent understanding of pupils' pastoral needs and cater for these fully and sensitively. Staff give pupils with difficult social and emotional problems excellent support to help these individuals become confident and happy learners. Staff are vigilant in all areas concerning the safeguarding of pupils. All activities are rigorously assessed for risk. The very caring, welcoming and happy atmosphere in the school is strongly appreciated by parents and carers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors work closely with all staff to ensure that high expectations are maintained for pupils' achievement and that provision is constantly improved. For example, the information and communication technology suite, library and the outside areas for the Early Years Foundation Stage children have been significantly upgraded to boost learning facilities. Robust systems to check pupils' progress and set challenging targets ensure that all individuals are helped to be successful and that no discrimination occurs. Staff are alert to spotting any individual who may be falling behind and putting appropriate support in place.

The quality of teaching is rigorously monitored across the school. Good use is made of the information gained to help teachers improve their work. However, not all of those with

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leadership roles are fully involved in this kind of monitoring and their overview of teaching and learning is, therefore, more limited.

The school works well to maintain excellent relationships with parents and carers. Their views are regularly surveyed and acted on where appropriate. They are kept regularly informed about their children's progress. The governing body has full involvement in all self-evaluation and strategic planning. Good systems are in place to involve governors in observing the work of the school and they have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Outstanding provision for safeguarding is underpinned by the excellent level of risk assessment and emphasis on maintaining top-quality training for all staff and governors. As a result, all aspects of safety and safeguarding are deeply ingrained in the work of the school, including in the curriculum provision.

The school has good links with other schools and partner organisations and uses these well to boost pupils' learning. The school's provision for promoting community cohesion is good, with effective plans constructed that help the school to engage with a range of community groups beyond the school and the immediate community. The pupils' heightened awareness of the plight of other people around the world through their charity fundraising work is one of many examples of the impact of the school's approach in this area.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good induction processes, including well-managed home visits, ensure that children settle into school quickly. Teachers and teaching assistants work effectively together to make sure learning is always interesting and fun for children. As a result, lots of smiles and enjoyment are evident around the Early Years Foundation Stage classrooms. A good example of this was noted as children worked well with a teaching assistant in an indoor

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picnic which extended language skills and cooperation well. Much good work is done by staff to work on children's language skills, noted as being weak when they start school, so that children become reasonably confident in talking, and basic reading and writing, by the time they start Year 1. Similarly, they acquire sound basic skills with number work. The curriculum is well designed to make the most of all opportunities for learning outdoors, although free-flow between the indoor and outdoor areas is still being developed. A good balance is maintained, with children having opportunities to explore and investigate independently through practical and play opportunities as well as having good opportunities to work in guided activities with adults. Children's behaviour is good and sometimes excellent. They learn to listen well and get on well with each other. The excellent relationships between staff and children ensure that all individuals feel valued and keen to do their best. The Early Years Foundation Stage is effectively managed. The headteacher carefully monitors the quality of lessons. However, the coordinator of the Early Years Foundation Stage does not utilise her management time effectively to monitor teaching and learning in order to develop an overview of the whole of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff are extremely caring and provide strong pastoral support for all children. They are vigilant in ensuring that all safeguarding and welfare procedures are followed through rigorously.

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

The proportion of parents and carers who returned a completed questionnaire is above average for an infant school of this size. An overwhelming majority of the responses were positive, with most stating that overall, they are happy with their children's experience at the school. All said they believe their children are safe at school and enjoy school, and the vast majority said that the school is led and managed well. Inspectors found many aspects of the school to be outstanding, thus endorsing these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Ursula's Catholic Infant 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 114 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 237 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	88	77	26	23	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	91	80	23	20	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	80	70	33	29	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	68	60	44	39	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	76	67	36	32	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	69	61	43	38	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	65	57	47	41	0	0	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)	65	57	39	34	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	69	61	39	34	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	70	61	39	34	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	64	56	38	33	3	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	84	74	26	23	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	84	74	30	26	0	0	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



11 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Ursula's Catholic Infant School, Romford, RM3 7JS

We would like to thank all of you for your help during the inspection. We enjoyed seeing you in your classrooms and talking with you at playtimes and lunchtimes.

Inspectors judge that you go to a school which gives you a good education

These are the main things that we found out about your school.

- Your school is welcoming and sets a positive climate for your learning.
- You enjoy school, and your behaviour in lessons and around the school is good.
- You have very good relationships with the adults who take good care of you.
- You feel very safe in school and have a very good understanding of healthy lifestyles.
- You make excellent contributions to your school and community.
- Almost all of your parents and carers are very pleased with your experience at school.
- Your attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 2 is average, and your progress across the school is good.

We have asked your school to make some further improvements.

- Tell you what you will be learning in lessons, and give you more opportunities to develop independent learning skills, through challenging activities.
- Make sure that the teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage use their assessment information to plan activities which develop your learning.

All of you can help, too, by working hard and taking advantage of the improvements that your school will be making. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Bartleman

Lead inspector

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