

Our Lady and St Oswald's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123553
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	380687
Inspection dates	14–15 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Rodney Braithwaite

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 of pupils on the school roll	138
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Steve McKenna
Headteacher	Veronica McLardie
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2009
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors saw 11 lessons or parts of lessons and observed five teachers. They held meetings with senior leaders and representatives of the governing body, and with pupils and members of staff. The inspection team observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including monitoring, self-evaluation records, policy documents, the school development plan, teacher's planning, minutes of governing body meetings and samples of pupils' work. A range of documents were looked at in relation to the safeguarding of pupils, including case studies of potentially vulnerable pupils. Inspectors examined questionnaires returned by 58 parents and carers, 76 pupils and 12 members of staff.

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

- The provision for, and the progress made by, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, especially that of boys in their communication and literacy skills.
- The achievement of boys in writing, and the progress of all pupils in mathematics, and the effectiveness of the school's efforts to improve these aspects.
- The effectiveness of teachers in developing pupils' speaking and listening skills.

Information about the school

Our Lady and St Oswald's is a smaller than average-sized primary school. The majority of pupils are White British. There are a small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups. No pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs and/or disabilities is much higher than average. The proportion of other pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, the largest number having moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school has four mixed-age classes and one single year class in Year 6. It makes provision daily for pupils arriving early for school. The school has Healthy Schools Gold status, and holds the National Association for Able Children in Education (NACE) Challenge Award for provision for gifted and talented pupils. There is a privately managed pre-school nursery within the school grounds, which is subject to separate inspection.

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

Our Lady and St Oswald's Catholic is a good school. Its outstanding strength is the concern of the whole staff, led by the headteacher, for the care, welfare and development of all the pupils in the school. This includes excellent guidance and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. The school is also epitomised by the excellent behaviour of its pupils, and their own exceptional care and concern for each other, particularly older pupils for younger ones. This also contributes to the outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. The school has made good advances in improving the use of progress data, and giving effective guidance and support to pupils in improving their attainment in mathematics and science. Consequently, standards of work are above average in mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. This, coupled with further improvements in the quality of pupils' reading and writing in Years 3 to 6, indicates that the school has good capacity for continued improvement. While boys' literacy skills are now better, they lag behind those of girls, especially in their earlier years. The school has new plans to address this but these have not been implemented yet.

Pupils agree with their parents' and carers' views that they are kept safe. They approach every day at school with enjoyment and are very happy in their learning and social development; as one parent commented: 'My children are thriving at school - there is a real sense of family and the children all seem very happy.' Generally the school has engaged successfully with parents and carers in partnership for the benefit of pupils' learning, and parents are delighted with many aspects of the school's provision. However, recently school communication with parents has not been clear enough with regard to pupils' arrival at school in the mornings. Consequently some groups of parents have not been sufficiently aware of, or not understood, new policies or the reasons for their introduction.

Good teaching is leading to good progress by most pupils throughout the school. Children get a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where they enter with the skills expected for their age. The good outcomes for pupils in the school owe much to the many excellent aspects of their personal and social development, particularly their very positive attitudes to learning. The school's present self-evaluation of its performance is accurate and helpful in signposting the way ahead.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Build upon the recent improvement in the attainment and progress of boys throughout the school in writing by:
 - implementing as quickly as possible the new action plan for the development of boys' literacy skills
 - strengthening further boys' reading skills in order to give them wider vocabularies to use in writing
 - increasing opportunities for them to write across all subjects of the curriculum.

- Enabling all groups of parents and carers to have a thorough understanding of school procedures and communication by:
 - ensuring that parents and carers clearly understand that they can express their concerns to school leaders and work in partnership with the school to achieve mutually acceptable outcomes
 - encouraging members of the governing body to assist the school more actively in communicating regularly with parents and carers.

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

Pupils respond very positively and enthusiastically to well-planned and often stimulating teaching. Their attitudes and behaviour both in and outside school are excellent. The local community also recognises the outstanding behaviour of the pupils. On several occasions during the inspection, older pupils were observed helping younger ones, sometimes their 'buddies', to overcome personal learning or physical difficulties. Almost all pupils say that they enjoy school, as one of them said: 'I hate weekends, because I don't learn anything then.' Their enjoyment was seen in most lessons, as for instance in Year 6 when pupils used laptops to do their own research into the lives of historical figures such as Isambard Kingdom Brunel, Mary Seacole and Pocohontas. Their concentration and thirst for knowledge were all-consuming and they made excellent relevant notes for further writing. Pupils are benefitting from teachers' good development of their speaking skills and pupils are keen to make verbal contributions.

Attainment has been fairly steady in English and mathematics over the last few years. At the end of Year 6, pupils leave with attainment above the national average. New strategies for improvement are becoming more effective. Progress in mathematics and reading, for example, has improved in Years 1 and 2 and is now good. This is not matched in boys' writing where progress is satisfactory rather than good. There is convincing evidence that pupils are now making improved and consistently good progress in mathematics in Years 3 to 6 because of better resources and more effective teaching. Boys in these year groups have improved their reading skills and, like the girls, are making good progress. Partly, as a result of this, their writing skills are also improving and although their progress is at least satisfactory, it is not as good as that of girls. Overall, most pupils including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress in their learning and are achieving well because of the good quality of planning and

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interventions which meet their specific needs. The small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make good progress and attain standards that are similar to those of others.

Pupils say that they all behave safely. They have very little concern about bullying, which, on the rare occasions it occurs, they say is always dealt with fairly by the staff. They mention the 'worry boxes' available for them to express any personal concerns, although very few claim to have needed them. Pupils have a good knowledge of healthy lifestyles which they try hard, although not always successfully, to put into practice. They are rightly proud of the school's Gold Healthy Schools status. Pupils make an excellent contribution to their own and the local community, planning and organising a Christmas afternoon for senior members of the parish, visiting the local hospital and charity fund raising for local hospices. Pupils take on a wide range of responsibilities and have a significant input into school rules and behaviour. Their attendance and punctuality are consistently good. Their good basic skills and willingness to cooperate with each other or work independently indicate they are well prepared for their future lives.

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	2
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	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have good relationships with pupils and a good understanding of their individual needs. This is because the school has consistently improved its assessment strategies in the last two years, and is using data effectively in planning the next steps in pupils' learning. Teachers also provide stimulating practical activities to

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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enhance learning. This was seen working particularly well in the mixed Year 4 and 5 class when pupils filmed and recorded their own versions of *The Hare and the Tortoise*. As a result, pupils’ speaking skills, dramatic improvisation and self-confidence came on in leaps and bounds as well as providing an exceptionally enjoyable learning experience. Planning ensures that pupils are involved in suitably challenging activities, and teachers have made increasingly successful efforts to help pupils know and understand their learning targets. Pupils’ involvement in setting their own targets is as yet under-developed. Teacher’s marking is generally helpful, although not all teachers are consistent in making suggestions for improvement. Teachers are very conscious of providing for the needs of all groups of pupils. In particular, provision is good for gifted and talented pupils, as confirmed by the NACE Challenge award.

The school provides a broad and stimulating curriculum for pupils. This contributes substantially to positive outcomes throughout the school, especially in the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of pupils. The school provides a number of interesting and well-supported extra-curricular activities and clubs, and exciting visits, including Blist Hill Victorian village, nominated by pupils. The school is careful to avoid repetition of learning year-on-year for pupils in mixed-age classes. Although reading provision has improved throughout the school, development of boys’ reading in order to provide them with a wider vocabulary is remains underdeveloped. In addition, pupils do not have enough opportunities to write in all subjects of the curriculum. This impacts particularly on boys who are, therefore, not getting the greater practise they need to improve their writing.

An atmosphere of care and consideration runs throughout the school and leads to excellent relationships. Pupils, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those in potentially vulnerable circumstances, benefit from excellent provision. This is due to the contributions of effective learning support assistants, and in particular the learning mentor, who are well trained. Provision for care and support is well managed by the special educational needs co-ordinator. Transition arrangements are excellent and there are a number of very effective links with outside agencies. There is good provision, including a hot drink and toast, for a group of pupils who arrive at school early each morning.

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?

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The headteacher gives very caring, positive and thoughtful leadership to the school. She sets the example in providing a high quality of care and support for pupils, as well as continually striving for improvement in the provision and outcomes for pupils. The headteacher works effectively with her senior team who are good role models as teachers and provide both energy and ambition to the school. In the last two years, leadership responsibilities have been more widely dispersed which has benefitted the overall management of the school. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are rigorous and help to maintain continuity in the development and improvement of teaching and learning. The effectiveness of the governing body is satisfactory. It has been very active in the past but recently has lost some active members including the chair and vice-chair. However, the newly appointed experienced chair is taking steps to develop the roles of governors further through suitable training and support. Members of the governing body provide satisfactory oversight of the school's work though they realise that their engagement with parents and carers is not proactive enough. The governing body has provided the school with effective and comprehensive safeguarding and child protection policies, which are firmly embedded in the school's work.

The school has made good progress in promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination, for example, by dealing effectively with some past underachievement in boys' reading. The engagement of most groups of parents and carers with the school has usually been open and effective. They have been kept consistently informed about their children's development and well-being. There has been a recent blip, though, in this relationship in the eyes of some parents because of a new policy relating to the entry of pupils into the school. School leaders realise that there has been a lack of effective communication regarding this matter, and is doing everything to restore the good engagement normally found, especially through encouraging all parents and carers to contact members of staff when they have an issue. Governors accept that their engagement with parents and carers has not been active enough. This has meant that they missed the opportunity to pick up this recent issue in communication more quickly. The school has a good range of partnerships especially with a number of other neighbouring primary and high schools. Pupils benefit from the regular use of the swimming pool at a local independent school. The promotion of community cohesion is good especially in the local community. There are links with other countries, for example, the global connection with Pakistan, and the school actively celebrates the languages and cultures of other ethnic groups in Britain as well as having a whole school programme of visits to the places of worship of several different faiths.

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	3

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met	
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
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	2
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

Most children enter the Early years Foundation Stage with the skills expected for their age, although some, especially boys, have lower than expected language and communication skills when they start. In past years, children have made mostly satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage but this has improved significantly and children are now making good progress in their learning, especially in their personal and social development. Boys also are making better progress in the development of their communication skills. In a comparatively short time children have developed much improved skills in cooperating with others, and are gaining in self-confidence and independence. They enjoy practical activities as part of their learning, and the adults ensure there is a balance of adult led and child initiated activities. This was seen in a 'play that number' game with a teaching assistant in the hall when children matched numbers to apparatus and played the correct number of beats on a drum. The staff have a good understanding of the needs of the children, in particular those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Adults observe and assess children's development consistently, and use the results effectively in their planning. As a result, children are happy, enjoy learning and mix well with each other. They benefit from being in a class with some pupils from Year 1 and regularly joining with the adjoining Year 1 and 2 class. A feature of the school is the very successful 'buddy' system and children in their Reception Year have excellent buddy role models assigned to look after them through many daily school activities. Although classroom resources have been improved recently, outdoor resources are in very moderate condition and the learning environment is less stimulating. The school has both plans and finance ready for improvement.

Leadership and management are good because of the positive impact of knowledgeable and experienced leaders. This has resulted in significant improvements in the provision and outcomes of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Adults engage well with parents and carers. The school is developing a good partnership with the nearby private nursery, some of whose children join the main school regularly for lunch.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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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

Just over two-fifths of all parents and carers responded to the questionnaire, which is above the national average. A great majority of parents and carers were positive in their responses to nearly all questions. In particular, they indicated unanimously that their children enjoy school and are kept safe. Most also think that teaching is good, and that their children make good progress, summed up by the parent who commented: 'We're very happy with the school and its fantastic teachers. Our children make fantastic progress and enjoy being in the school and its environment'. Mainly due to a recent change in the school's policy regarding parent and carer access to the school and playground in the mornings, a significant minority of parents and carers feel that the school management is not taking sufficient account of their views. The inspection team and school leadership agreed that this is a matter to be redressed urgently through improved communication in order to restore the previous harmonious relationships with almost all parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Our Lady and St Oswald's Catholic Primary 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 58 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 137 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	48	30	52	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	39	67	19	33	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	13	22	38	66	5	9	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	33	35	60	2	3	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	27	47	27	47	1	2	1	2
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	16	28	35	60	4	7	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	22	38	29	50	7	12	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)	19	33	30	52	4	7	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	16	28	39	67	0	0	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	41	25	43	2	3	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	24	24	41	11	19	4	7
The school is led and managed effectively	17	29	26	45	6	10	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	24	41	32	55	2	3	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.



16 November 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Our Lady and St Oswald's Catholic Primary School, Oswestry
SY11 2TG**

I want to give you a big 'thank you' for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed our time with you because of the way you enjoyed your learning and especially the way you look after each other. You really do make the 'buddy' system work very well. You go to a good school where you are extremely well cared for and kept very safe. Your behaviour is excellent and you are polite, cheerful and helpful at all times and very interesting to talk to, especially Year 6 explaining the lives of famous people in history. Your attainment in English and mathematics is above what it should be for your age and we think it is improving even more. You have done well in reading, particularly boys who enjoy reading to members of the Rotary Club. We have asked your school to help the boys to improve their writing. We know that you have improved recently but we think that you can do even better. We would like your reading to improve even more so that you have a wider vocabulary to use in your writing and we have suggested that you have more opportunities to write in different subjects.

We are pleased that you get on well with your teachers and their assistants. Your attendance is good and you know how to keep healthy and safe. Most of your parents and carers agree with most of what I have explained here. However on one occasion recently we do not think some of them understood what the school was doing when it changed how you come into school in the mornings. We have asked the school leaders to try to make sure that all your parents and carers know what the school policies are, especially new ones, and that they also know that they can ask members of staff to find time to discuss any issues they have. You can certainly help in this by telling your parents as much as you can about what is happening at school and making sure you give them any letters you sometimes have from your teachers. You are doing well at school, and being well prepared for your future lives. We hope this continues in the future.

Yours sincerely

Rodney Braithwaite
Lead inspector

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