

# Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	120609
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lincolnshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	380072
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 November 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Laver

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	155
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Judy Saunders
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sarah Weldon
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 November 2008
<b>School address</b>	The Drove Sleaford NG34 7AT
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons and observed eight teachers. They held meetings with staff, groups of pupils and members of the governing body. They talked to parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at records of the monitoring of teaching and learning, the governing body minutes, the school improvement plan, data on pupils' progress and reports from the School Improvement Partner. Inspectors analysed questionnaires received from 63 parents and carers, 77 pupils and 14 staff.

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

- How effectively the school has raised attainment and improved progress in mathematics and writing since the most recent national test results.
- The extent to which teaching is now having a more consistent impact on achievement and progress.
- The extent to which the school's intervention strategies are having a positive impact on the progress of vulnerable and lower-attaining pupils.
- How effectively the school is developing the accountability of subject leaders and other middle managers, and strengthening their role in monitoring and evaluation.

## Information about the school

Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Primary School is a smaller-than-average school. Most pupils are of White British heritage and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, which includes a range of learning, behavioural and emotional needs, is below average, although until recently it was significantly higher. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage in a Reception class. The school operates a morning breakfast club and an after-school club. The school holds the Healthy Schools, Basic Skills and Active Mark awards.

**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 of Good Counsel Catholic Primary School provides a good standard of education. It has improved considerably in recent years, so that the school now enables pupils to make good progress in acquiring knowledge and skills while also developing a range of personal qualities well. This ensures that pupils are well prepared to make a good start to the next phase of their education. The school's success is acknowledged by parents and carers, a typical comment being, 'We are delighted with the quality of education, pastoral care and the extra-curricular activities on offer'.

Children make a good start to their school career in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The good progress made there continues as pupils move through the school, eventually leaving at the age of eleven with above average attainment. Both boys and girls, and all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, share in this good progress. In recent times, increasing numbers of pupils have joined the school other than at the usual times. The school integrates these pupils very successfully in the school, although their academic progress is sometimes slower at first than that of the other pupils. Improved progress since the previous inspection is due to several factors, notably improved teaching, better monitoring of progress, and the implementation of a range of strategies to support the learning of vulnerable or previously underachieving pupils. The best teaching is characterised by high expectations, good deployment of support staff, good use of assessment and a range of activities which encourage pupils to learn actively. Occasionally, there is too much teacher direction, too few independent learning opportunities, limited use of success criteria and lesson objectives, and some activities which are not particularly challenging. In these instances, some more-able pupils, although making good progress over time, do not achieve as well as they should in individual lessons.

Pupils have a very positive attitude towards learning. They enjoy coming to school, as reflected in the high attendance rate. They feel safe and well supported and they behave well. Pupils respond enthusiastically both to lessons and the good range of enrichment activities such as after-school clubs and visits. They get on well with each other, reflecting the school's caring ethos. Parents are encouraged to attend liturgies and other school events. Well-developed procedures to support vulnerable pupils and promote attendance underpin pupils' strong personal development and good academic progress.

The headteacher and governors promote and manage change very effectively. New

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staff have been integrated into the school well and share in the leadership's vision for continued improvement. The monitoring of progress is being extended to involve subject and key stage leaders. All staff are now more accountable for pupils' progress. The school's record of improvement, the drive for success, better progress and the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation, together demonstrate that the school has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the overall quality of teaching, ensuring that the best practice is spread more consistently throughout the school, by:
  - ensuring that more-able pupils in particular always achieve to their full potential in lessons through providing them with consistently challenging work
  - providing pupils with more individual learning opportunities in lessons, independent of the teacher
  - ensuring that teachers always use learning objectives and success criteria constructively so that pupils have a clear understanding of how they can achieve to the best of their ability.

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

Children currently join the school with skills and experiences that are in line with age-related expectations, although these levels vary from year to year. When they leave Reception, children's attainment is just above average, although lower in communication, language and literacy than in several other areas, such as social attributes and the range of other personal skills. Above-average attainment at the end of Year 6 has been reflected in National Curriculum test and assessment results, except for the most recent ones in 2011. In that cohort there was a very high proportion of pupils who had only recently joined the school, many with special educational needs. This was largely responsible for the below-average attainment. Attainment is now above average again, and the school has successfully addressed some areas of relative weakness, particularly in mathematics and boys' writing, through a range of teaching, learning and support strategies. Currently, pupils are on track to meet or exceed challenging targets. Lesson observations during the inspection showed strengths both in pupils' attitudes and their progress. Pupils' keenness to respond and participate actively in lessons was very evident. For example, in a mathematics lesson for younger pupils, the teacher skilfully used a range of activities and props to teach pupils how to divide numbers. She involved all pupils through questioning, briskly-paced activities and effective use of support staff to assist less-able pupils, while getting them to explain to each other how they solved mathematical problems. The pupils were very enthusiastic and made good progress. In an English lesson for older pupils, they responded well to the teacher's high expectations and opportunities to work collaboratively when learning how to use the active and passive voices of verbs effectively.

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Pupils’ good learning is reinforced by their strong personal and social development. They get on well with each other in lessons, behave well and feel very safe in school. Attendance is well above the national average. Pupils enjoy enrichment activities, such as the choir and gardening. There is a good take-up of sporting activities, reflecting the school’s Active Mark award. Pupils also talk knowledgeably about the health qualities of food and the benefits of exercise, contributing to the Healthy Schools award. Pupils relish taking on responsibility, such as serving on the active school council which has a budget and is run by the pupils themselves, or in helping younger pupils and supporting local charities. Pupils’ willingness to take on responsibility and their good level of basic skills ensure that they are well prepared for the next phase of education and contribute to their development as well-rounded young citizens. Pupils’ strong spiritual development is very evident in their behaviour, the work on display and in the opportunities for meaningful reflection in the school’s liturgies. Pupils have a strong involvement in the local community and they learn about other faiths, although their understanding of cultural diversity in the wider world is less developed.

*These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes*

<b>Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils’ behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Pupils make good progress because they want to learn and they respond well to good teaching. They know their targets for improvement, and although there are some inconsistencies, such as when pupils get imprecise guidance on how to improve their work, pupils usually get good feedback in the marking. Other strengths

<sup>1</sup> 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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in teaching include the good use of assessment to plan appropriate work and the effective deployment of teaching assistants and other adults, particularly in assisting those pupils with learning difficulties. When teachers get pupils to work in groups or pairs, the pupils respond responsibly. Teachers use questioning well to involve all pupils and to test and further their understanding. Although learning objectives and success criteria are not always used consistently, in the best lessons teachers are skilled at adapting their planning and activities to further the learning of all pupils. Teachers occasionally talk for too long, thereby missing opportunities to help pupils learn more actively.

The curriculum is an evolving instrument for engaging pupils’ interests and promoting good progress. Skills in literacy and numeracy are promoted through a range of subject areas: for example, work on the First World War combines literacy development with learning historical knowledge and skills. The curriculum is enhanced by the use of facilities in local secondary schools and support from outside specialists, for example in the teaching of French. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, both inside and outside lessons, enabling them to make good progress. Several pupils experience a healthy and enjoyable start to the school day in the breakfast club. Good care, guidance and support are also evident in the well-developed programme for personal, social and health education and the initiatives to promote high attendance. There are good transition procedures which enable pupils to move on confidently to their next school. The increasingly high number of pupils who join the school other than at the usual transition points are integrated very successfully into what is a very inclusive school.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is firmly committed to continued improvement. Since the previous inspection, she has managed several changes in staffing successfully and has established an enthusiastic leadership team which is developing its role in monitoring and evaluation. The quality of governance has improved considerably since the previous inspection: governors are now active within the school, enthusiastic, knowledgeable, fully involved in the school’s self-evaluation process, supportive and appropriately challenging in holding the school to account. The school now uses assessment and the resulting pupil progress meetings more effectively to identify underachieving pupils and put support procedures in place. All staff now expect to be

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held accountable for pupils’ progress and are confident in assessing it. There are good partnerships with parents and carers, reinforced by regular communications and invitations to parents and carers to come into school for events such as the liturgies. There are productive links with other schools and outside agencies, for example when meeting the needs of vulnerable pupils. The school has robust safeguarding procedures, which are monitored and reviewed regularly. Pupils are taught how to keep safe in all circumstances, both outside lessons and when engaged in activities, such as using computers. The school’s inclusiveness is evident in the application of the school’s equal opportunities policy: pupils feel confident and they relate well to each other; they feel valued and all have equal access to what the school offers. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. Pupils have many opportunities to take on responsibility in school and to engage with the local community through activities such as fund-raising. They learn about other faiths, for example by visiting the nearest mosque. However, other than a few activities such as a fund-raising link with Uganda, there are no developed links with schools outside the local area, and some pupils have a limited understanding of the range of values, beliefs and life experiences in multicultural Britain and beyond.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress from the moment they join the school because they immediately become part of a welcoming, inclusive and caring environment. As a result, children settle quickly and learn conventions such as how to move around the school safely, how to listen to adults, how to take their turn and how to take care with basic hygiene. Children were observed listening well and participating enthusiastically in sessions where they were learning about letters and sounds. They also make good progress in developing skills like counting and in making early steps

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in accurate writing. Several pupils speak confidently and clearly to visitors. By the end of Reception, children attain at a level above age-related expectations in several areas. Good teaching encourages children’s enthusiasm. This was observed particularly in a session when children were discussing their ideas on dinosaurs, and showing an eagerness to write about what happens after a dinosaur baby has hatched from its egg. There is a good link between indoor and outdoor activities, and between activities initiated by staff and the children themselves, although occasionally there are missed opportunities to further extend children’s learning through challenging questioning when they are engaged in independent activities.

Children benefit from good care and support, including mother tongue support for children at an early stage of learning English. There are good and developing links with parents and carers, for example through a weekly newsletter which keeps the home informed about what is happening in Reception, and which enables parents and carers to make suggestions. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leader is new in post. Effective systems to enable staff to track progress and use the information constructively to both monitor progress over time, and to inform regular planning, are not yet fully embedded. Nevertheless, there have been improvements since the previous inspection, such as in the linking of indoor and outdoor activities, and constructive links are developing between Reception and Year 1.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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	3

## Views of parents and carers

The rate of return for the inspection questionnaire was broadly average. Parents and carers are very appreciative of most aspects of the school’s provision for their children, particularly its welcoming and inclusive ethos. Parents and carers believe strongly that their children enjoy school, feel safe and benefit from very good care and support, making statements such as, ‘There is a very caring ethos, the staff care about each child and the children care about each other’. Only a few parents and carers have concerns, principally about the degree to which their children make sufficient progress, that the school does not meet their children’s particular needs, or does not take sufficient account of their suggestions or concerns. Inspectors looked into these concerns. The inspection team found that the school provides a good level of support for pupils, communicates regularly with families, and ensures that the majority of pupils make good progress both academically and in their personal development.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Our Lady of Good Counsel 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 63 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 155 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	63	21	33	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	48	76	13	21	2	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	44	70	17	27	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	41	65	15	24	5	8	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	40	63	18	29	2	3	1	2
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	36	57	25	40	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	38	60	22	35	3	5	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)	33	52	23	37	3	5	1	2
The school meets my child’s particular needs	41	65	15	24	7	11	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	48	28	44	2	3	3	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	54	21	33	6	10	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	46	73	11	17	3	5	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	50	79	9	14	4	6	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](http://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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



23 November 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Primary School, Sleaford, NG34 7AT**

Thank you for welcoming us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting you, talking to you and seeing you in lessons.

Our Lady of Good Counsel School gives you a good education. You make good progress all the way up from Reception to Year 6 because your teachers teach you well and you are keen to learn. You also behave well, attend school more regularly than pupils do in many other schools, and you feel safe and well cared for. We know that you enjoy the school clubs, like the choir. Your teachers mark your work well and most of you know your targets. You are good at taking responsibility, for example on the school council. You have a good level of knowledge and skills in English and mathematics and are well prepared for when you finally leave the school. Your headteacher leads the school well and all the staff give you as many opportunities as possible. Although you do well in your work, occasionally you do not get enough guidance on how exactly you can improve it further. Sometimes you do not get enough opportunities to learn on your own, and some of you occasionally find parts of the work easy.

In order to make your good school even better, we have asked the school to make sure that teachers always give you: clear guidance on how you can improve your work and make more progress in lessons; plenty of opportunities to learn on your own; and work that makes you think hard and thus make even more progress.

You can help your teachers achieve this if you continue to work as hard and enthusiastically as we saw you doing during the inspection.

Yours sincerely

John Laver  
Lead inspector

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