

Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115148
Local Authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	379021
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Mary Summers

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	415
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jim McEvoy
Headteacher	Margaret Sullivan
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2007
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They visited 25 lessons which were taught by a total of 17 teachers. They observed the school's work, and looked at documents associated with safeguarding procedures and self-evaluation. They examined data and information about pupils' progress and looked at samples of their work. They scrutinised improvement plans also, as well as planning for lessons and the curriculum. Minutes from meetings held by the governing body and monitoring and evaluation reports written by senior leaders as well as the local authority were also examined. Inspectors took account of the views of pupils and of 28 members of staff who had completed questionnaires, as well as the content of 215 questionnaires that had been completed and returned by parents and carers.

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

- How good is girls' achievement throughout the school?
- How well does the school meet the needs of more-able pupils at Key Stage 2
- How effectively does the school track and analyse the progress of different groups of pupils?
- Is the provision for pupils with special educational needs monitored and evaluated effectively?

Information about the school

Pupils travel from a wide area to attend this larger-than-average primary school. Most are from White British families. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is much lower than average. The proportion identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average; many of these have moderate learning difficulties. The school has won a number of national awards in recent years, including Healthy Schools status and the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

Our Lady of Lourdes Pre-School, a privately run concern, operates from the school site and was inspected separately.

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

This is a good school, whose strong spiritual ethos and high levels of care and support for pupils help them develop mature, reflective and very positive attitudes to learning. Those attributes contribute significantly to the pupils' good progress in lessons. Pupils grow into enthusiastic young learners who respect each other's ideas and opinions. They enjoy coming to school, as their very high levels of attendance show. Their behaviour is excellent and they make an extremely strong contribution to the school and wider community. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Parents and carers value all the school has to offer. One, echoing the views of many, wrote 'My children have all had the opportunity to grow as individuals, developing their own unique talents, skills and gifts.'

Achievement is good for boys and girls at both key stages. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well because of the well-targeted support they receive. A dip in pupils' attainment in writing in Year 6 last year has been addressed successfully through several initiatives to ensure pupils of all ages extend their basic spelling, grammar and punctuation skills. At the same time, an exciting variety of topics stimulates pupils to write creatively and imaginatively and use an extensive range of vocabulary.

Teaching is good overall, but it is inconsistent throughout the school. Teachers have excellent relationships with their classes and pupils feel confident to ask for help if they need it. Occasionally however, learning is hindered by the slow pace of lessons. Although there are a few examples of excellent questioning by teachers, which encourage pupils to develop their thinking and understanding, this is not the case in every class. Teachers make regular assessments of pupils' progress, but do not always use this to plan lessons which challenge pupils at different levels, including those who are more-able.

Self-evaluation procedures are good and mean that school leaders have an accurate overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Systems to track pupils' progress are providing senior leaders with accurate information to help them identify pupils who are at risk of underachievement. Prompt action is taken to provide support for those pupils and their progress is good. Development-plan targets are not all sufficiently well-focused to address some of the weaknesses. Not all plans contain clear and measureable statements of success and milestones to help leaders judge how quickly they are improving. Nonetheless, there is a strong commitment to improvement amongst the staff and the school is supported well by the governing

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body. The school has a good capacity for sustained improvement, as demonstrated by the way the dip in standards in writing in 2010 was dealt with quickly.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching is good throughout the school by:
 - using assessment information more effectively to plan activities that challenge pupils at different levels
 - ensuring that lessons move at a fast-enough rate, so that learning continues at a quick pace
 - improving the use of questions to explore pupils' thinking and extend their understanding.
- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that school improvement plans always contain clear measures of success, monitoring procedures and interim benchmarks by which to judge progress towards intended outcomes.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children's skills levels vary considerably when they start in the Reception Year, but, overall, are in line with those typical for their age. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, their attainment is above average. Girls and boys make good progress, responding with great enthusiasm and interest to the activities that teachers present in lessons. Achievement in science is especially good because pupils are motivated so well by the challenging and interesting nature of the lessons. In a Year 4 lesson, for example, pupils were inspired by their recent visit to Southend library, where they studied a range of sculptures. They investigated the properties of malleable materials, hypothesising about the best conditions for their use as they designed and built their own sculptures. Pupils' scientific knowledge, skills and understanding were far beyond those expected of nine-year-olds nationally. In a Year 6 English lesson, pupils worked together to discuss the feelings of a character in a story they were writing. The use of drama enabled them to assume the role of the character themselves and, subsequently, they were able to write some outstanding pieces of work, using imaginative vocabulary and a wide range of technical skills successfully. Their progress was excellent, but they gained a great deal of confidence and independence also.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils are extremely well behaved in lessons and around the school. They go out of their way to support and encourage each other, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the few who represent different ethnicities and cultures. They reflect sensitively about their own faith and beliefs during assembly and consider carefully their hopes and dreams for the future. Pupils have a good knowledge about how to keep safe in and out of school. They have a good awareness of the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle, recognised through Healthy Schools status. They participate enthusiastically in physical education lessons

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and in sports activities outside the school day. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to their school and wider communities, through their work on the school council, the responsibilities they assume to support younger pupils, and voluntary work within the locality, for example, with the elderly and the Church. They have an extensive knowledge of international communities and cultures through their strong links with schools in Sierra Leone and France. Their above-average basic skills and high attendance rate mean they are well prepared for their future education.

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	2
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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have good subject knowledge, which enables them to present lessons confidently and answer pupils' questions clearly. The best lessons encourage the pupils to think carefully and give them confidence to attempt new learning. Innovative teaching and learning methods are used, such as discussion and the use of drama to extend pupils' imaginative vocabulary very effectively. In a few less-successful lessons, teachers talk for too long, rather than encouraging pupils' active involvement, and this slows the pace of learning. Occasionally, teachers' questions are not challenging enough, demand only one-word answers, and do not extend pupils' learning. Teachers track pupils' progress effectively and the results can be seen in good progress in many, but not yet all classes. In some, the information about progress is not being used well enough to ensure that the activities in lessons challenge pupils at different levels.

The good curriculum supports pupils' academic and personal development well.

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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Subjects are linked together successfully to add relevance and interest to pupils' learning. Good opportunities exist for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects, for instance, in science, where they learn to represent their findings in graphs and write the results of their investigations using the correct scientific method. The curriculum links pupils' faith to their daily lives successfully, while valuing others' views and beliefs. Effective partnerships with local organisations provide useful opportunities for pupils to extend their academic, creative, and sporting skills. Pupils appreciate the wide variety of clubs on offer, such as Irish dancing, Spanish, construction and choir.

Pupils are cared for extremely well in school. The school's strong commitment towards treating each pupil as an individual results in them feeling very comfortable and ready to learn. Effective links with local secondary schools mean that the pupils transfer easily at the end of Year 6. Potentially vulnerable pupils are monitored carefully and support offered very promptly should problems occur. Strong links with external agencies, for example, the Dyslexia Association and local special schools, mean that staff are well trained to help pupils with very specific needs. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have carefully designed individual learning plans, which are reviewed regularly and contribute to their good progress. Excellent systems to promote good attendance and punctuality mean that this has a high priority amongst pupils and families.

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 leadership team gives a firm steer to the school's work and there is a clear focus on securing improvement, including in teaching and learning. Senior and middle managers provide good support to the headteacher, taking an active role in monitoring performance as well as driving improvements. The Early Years manager has had a strong voice in leading developments, in writing for example, with some innovative work in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, which is leading to pupils developing a more secure knowledge and understanding of letter sounds and spelling patterns. The leadership of provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and ensures that staff are updated constantly with new information and strategies to help pupils with specific problems. The school has a secure knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses, but plans to drive improvement in some areas are not detailed enough to ensure that improvements happen quickly enough.

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Most parents and carers develop good levels of trust in the staff because of the strong partnerships that exist between them and the school. They appreciate the regular newsletters and meetings to discuss their children's progress. The new Virtual Learning Environment is being extended to pupils and parents and carers throughout the school after a very successful pilot last year in Year 5.

Governance is good. The governing body includes a wide range of useful expertise with which to support the school. Members take prospective parents around the school regularly to explain the school's philosophy and vision. The governing body is involved actively in monitoring the school's work. However, it does not always record its findings or share this information with the full governing body.

Safeguarding procedures are good. There are very well-organised arrangements to ensure that pupils are safe at school. The site supervisor plays a key role in ensuring staff, pupils', parents' and carers' safety throughout the day. Staff promote equality of opportunity well. Senior staff track the progress of different groups of pupils carefully to identify underachievement. Racist incidents are rare and procedures are in place to ensure that any which arise are tackled promptly. The school promotes community cohesion well within the school and locality and has developed useful links with schools in the United Kingdom and overseas. It does not yet evaluate the effectiveness of its provision well enough, however, to continue to build upon existing strengths.

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	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

Children settle in quickly to the Reception Year and begin to develop their confidence

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and independence. The atmosphere is warm and inviting and children come into school happily each morning, ready to engage in all the activities provided for them. Relationships with parents and carers are positive and improving due to the efforts of the new Early Years Foundation Stage leader and this means that they are confident they can leave their children at school, secure in the knowledge that they will be safe and happy. There are effective systems in place to ensure that the children transfer easily from pre-school playgroups, including from the setting which operates from the school site.

Children enjoy a good range of activities that are directed by adults and some that they choose for themselves. Consequently, they make good progress, especially in their personal, social and emotional development and in basic literacy and numeracy skills. Activities led by adults are mostly effective, enabling children to develop their knowledge of letters and sounds and number awareness well. Children 'wrote' letters and cards to their parents and friends, for example, calling into the 'post office' to 'buy stamps' and post them in the 'letter box'. Adults keep a close check on children's progress. Children like choosing activities for themselves, but their learning is sometimes hindered by the fact that adults do not interact with them sufficiently, to challenge their thinking and extend their language.

Leadership is good. The new leader has made a positive start in reviewing the current provision and in identifying areas which require improvement.

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 parental questionnaires returned was higher than average. Most of those who responded are positive about the school's work. All say that their children enjoy school. Virtually all agree that their children are kept safe and that the school encourages them to develop a healthy lifestyle. The very large majority were happy with their children's experience at school. Those positive views were endorsed by inspection findings.

A few parents and carers expressed concerns about communication between home and school and about leadership and management generally. Inspection evidence confirms that the school is led and managed well, but that the headteacher could be more visible and accessible to parents and carers on a daily basis to deal with their suggestions and concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Our Lady of Lourdes 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 215 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 415 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	175	81	39	18	0	0	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	182	85	27	13	3	1	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	113	53	85	40	11	5	4	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	126	59	69	32	11	5	6	3
The teaching is good at this school	147	68	51	24	11	5	3	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	126	59	69	32	15	7	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	126	59	77	36	7	3	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)	132	61	61	28	5	2	5	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	129	60	65	30	13	6	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	125	58	66	31	10	5	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	119	55	71	33	10	5	4	4
The school is led and managed effectively	136	63	54	25	12	6	4	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	152	71	49	23	7	3	1	1

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.



30 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3HS

Thank you so much for welcoming us recently to your school and giving us your opinions about the school. Your views in the questionnaire and everything else that we saw helped us to get to know your school and how well it works. You go to a good school. Here are some of the things we liked best.

- You attend school regularly, work hard in class, and behave extremely well.
- The teaching is good and helps you to make good progress.
- You show high levels of respect for one another's ideas and opinions.
- You do some good work in helping others in school, the local community, and overseas.
- You understand how to keep safe, healthy, and fit.
- You are keen to learn about different countries and cultures.
- The adults look after you very well and arrange a wide range of activities to make learning exciting.

There are a few things that could be even better. We have asked teachers to set work at the right levels, not too easy and not too hard, so you can all make even faster progress. We think that the lessons in some classes could move more quickly, so that you continue to learn at a quick pace. We have asked the teachers to make sure they ask you questions that make you think hard. Finally, we have asked the headteacher and governing body to write more detailed plans to ensure that things improve more quickly. You can all play your part in helping your school become better by making sure you work hard, behave well and continue to attend school every day unless you are ill.

Yours sincerely

Mary Summers
Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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