

# Our Lady's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	110479
<b>Local authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	378106
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 April 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	David Wynford Jones

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>	202
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Brian Shelley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mark Holdsworth
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 September 2006
<b>School address</b>	Amersham Road Chesham Bois Amersham Buckinghamshire HP6 5PL
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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	26–27 April 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	378106



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## Introduction

Inspection team

David Wynford Jones

Additional inspector

Deirdre Crutchley

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited an assembly and 13 lessons, observing seven teachers. Some pupils in Years 2 and 6 were heard read. Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), as well as documents provided by the school, in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work and looked at 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 133 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, together with those from staff and pupils.

## Information about the school

Our Lady's Catholic Primary School is similar in size to other primary schools. The large majority of the pupils are of White British origin. The remaining pupils come from a number of different minority ethnic heritages. There is no predominant group. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language and none is at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is broadly similar to the national average as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs or supported by school action plus. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is considerably lower than the national average. In 2011, the school met the government's floor standards which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The deputy headteacher led the school during the autumn term 2011. The headteacher assumed responsibility in January 2012.

A serious incident that occurred at the school since the previous education inspection is under investigation by the appropriate authorities. Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind. The welfare provision in the school was evaluated against the regulations that are in place and inspection judgements are based on the evidence available at the time of the 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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>

## Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is successfully emerging from a period of a decline in its performance and shows the capacity to improve. It is not a good school because improvements are needed in aspects of leadership and the achievement of pupils.
- Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Girls tend to outperform the boys. However, the gap is closing. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall but it is variable between classes because the quality of teaching is not consistently good. Pupils' progress in writing is slower than in reading because pupils have insufficient opportunities to consolidate and extend their writing skills in other lessons and some pupils' knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is insecure.
- Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory and improving. They are polite. Most have a positive attitude to learning and have a satisfactory understanding of personal safety. Their attendance is above average.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall. Increasingly, there are examples of good teaching on which the school can build. Teachers do not always make best use of assessment information to plan work that challenges pupils of different abilities. As a result, expectations of what some pupils can achieve are not high enough. Marking, although improving, does not consistently provide pupils with sufficient guidance to improve their work.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Robust monitoring and evaluation of how well the school was doing has enabled the headteacher and senior leaders to identify where there were weaknesses in teaching and learning. As a result, changes are improving provision and outcomes for pupils. Most middle leaders have not yet acquired sufficient skills in using assessment information to ensure pupils make good progress and to contribute to whole-school development. The governing body is supportive but does not critically evaluate the school's performance or routinely hold senior leaders to account.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

- Accelerate the rate of pupils' progress, especially in writing, by:
  - making effective use of assessment information to plan lessons and to identify outcomes that are closely matched to pupils' differing needs and abilities
  - consolidating the recently introduced marking policy so that all pupils are clear about their next steps for improvement
  - reinforcing pupils' writing skills and phonic knowledge in other lessons.
- Improve the leadership of the school by:
  - developing the skills of middle leaders in analysing and using assessment data to raise expectations, to challenge their colleagues and to accelerate pupils' progress
  - ensuring the governing body critically evaluates the school's performance and holds the senior leadership team to account.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge above those expected for their age and make satisfactory progress. They interact well with each other and move freely between indoor and outdoor activities. They are confident, and willingly engaged the inspector in conversation. Some talked enthusiastically about the activities recorded in their 'learning journey' folders.

Most pupils have a satisfactory understanding of phonics and use their knowledge appropriately to read unfamiliar words. However, teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what they can achieve given their starting point. By Year 2 pupils are developing their phonic skills satisfactorily. This is as a result of recent initiatives within the school. However, some of the older pupils in Years 3 to 6 do not use phonic strategies confidently enough to support their reading. This can be attributed to the lack of emphasis in the past on the teaching of phonics and a lack of regular opportunities for pupils to read aloud to their teachers. Nevertheless, pupils in the current Years 2 and 6 are on track to reach above the expected levels in reading by the end of the year.

Although attainment in writing is above average, it is not quite as high as in reading and mathematics. This is because pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to consolidate their skills when writing in other subjects and are not regularly reminded of their literacy targets. Basic strategies, such as the use of dictionaries and thesauri, to check spelling and to extend their vocabulary are not routine. Pupils' progress is starting to accelerate but remains variable as they move through the school. Pupils tend to make more rapid progress at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 where teaching

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is stronger. However, it is now becoming more consistent following improvements in the quality of teaching. Given the pupils' starting points, by the end of Year 6 their progress and achievement are satisfactory.

Boys tend to make slightly slower progress than the girls; the progress of most sizable groups, for example White British, those not entitled to free school meals and those without special educational needs, is similar to that found nationally. The progress of the majority of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is similarly satisfactory. The gap in performance between boys and girls is closing because, in the lessons observed, more of the work was tailored to capture boys' interest. For example, in a Year 5 literacy lesson, pupils worked well in pairs to draft a letter of complaint. They discussed the use of words such as might, should, must and may to strengthen the text and the argument as they drafted the letter.

The large majority of parents and carers consider that their children are making good progress, and that the school helps their children to develop skills in communication, reading, writing and mathematics. The inspection identified examples of good progress, but it is not yet consistent enough across the school to be good overall.

**Quality of teaching.**

Teaching is satisfactory overall. Relationships between pupils and staff are good. Teachers act as positive role models to promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers plan their lessons appropriately and ensure that the requirements of the National Curriculum are met. However, they do not always build in enough opportunities to promote and consolidate pupils' phonic and writing skills. Most lessons begin with the teacher sharing the purpose of the lesson, but they do not routinely make clear their expectations of the pupils working at different levels. This is because assessment information has not been used effectively to identify challenging outcomes for different ability groups. Consequently, most pupils make satisfactory rather than good progress. Adult support is usually deployed well to assist individual and small-group learning, particularly to support pupils with disabilities and special educational needs. Improved planning clearly identifies the support needed to ensure these pupils make at least satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points and needs.

Where teaching is best, teachers make effective use of assessment information to plan work that builds on previous learning, captures pupils' imagination and is well matched to their needs and ability. Pupils are encouraged to undertake research and to develop their reading skills. Teachers use questioning skills effectively to probe pupils' understanding and to challenge their thinking. The pace of lessons is brisk. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils responded well to a range of quick-fire questions from the class teacher. They used subject-specific terminology confidently to describe equilateral, isosceles and scalene triangles. In the practical activity that followed they were encouraged to read the questions carefully before they calculated the angles of different types of triangles and correctly identified sides of equal lengths.

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Pupils' work is usually marked regularly. Teachers make good use of praise and there are some helpful next-step comments that help pupils to make progress towards their literacy and numeracy targets. However, the recently introduced marking policy has yet to be implemented consistently in all subjects to ensure all pupils are fully aware of the next steps towards reaching their targets.

Most parents and carers think that their children are well taught. Inspectors found that teaching has improved recently and there is more good teaching in the school, but it is not consistent enough to enable all pupils to make good progress from their starting points and achieve well.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils' behaviour and attitude to work are improving rapidly. They are now taking greater responsibility for their own actions and are developing a more positive attitude towards learning. Pupils are welcoming, polite and courteous to visitors and show respect and understanding for one another. There are very few bullying or racist incidents. Pupils confirm that instances of any form of bullying, including name calling and fighting, are infrequent and, if they do occur, are dealt with swiftly. Pupils say they enjoy school, that behaviour has improved following the updating of the behaviour policy and that they feel safe. The curriculum provides pupils with a range of opportunities to understand how they can keep themselves safe. They are able to explain clearly the issues relating to personal safety, including internet safety. Pupils' attendance is also improving and is now above average. Pupils' positive interaction with each other contributes much to their social and moral development.

Most parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire are convinced their children feel safe and the very large majority stated that behaviour is good. However, some stated that lessons are interrupted by inappropriate behaviour. Inspectors endorse their views that pupils feel safe and would agree that behaviour has improved but it is not yet good. There are instances of low-level disruption rather than serious misbehaviour.

### **Leadership and management**

All staff have responded positively to the headteacher's vision for school improvement and initiatives to drive their professional development forward. For example, there have been improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' behaviour. Systems and structures have been reviewed and a detailed rapid school development plan has been agreed. The plan is being implemented systematically and effectively. In addition, the school's computerised system for recording and analysing pupils' attainment and progress has been updated. Good use is made of this information to challenge underperformance in teaching and learning. As a result, pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress. Parents and carers are pleased with the changes. One wrote, 'The new headteacher is extremely proactive and has a strong vision of how the school should be. He is a clear leader and already within the

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short time that he has been here, he has breathed new life into the whole school community.' Others made similar comments.

Middle leaders, under the guidance of the headteacher, are developing their expertise well and are beginning to identify priorities for the school's future development. However, they have not fully developed their skills in analysing assessment information to support their colleagues and in ensuring pupils make accelerated progress.

The governing body has worked closely with the local authority to appoint a headteacher, ensure stability and address staffing issues. The governing body is now more aware of its role and responsibilities. A wide range of policies are being reviewed and updated but the governing body has yet to critically evaluate the school's performance against external measures. Historically, the governing body has not held the senior leadership team sufficiently to account and has still to fully develop this role. Issues raised following a recent local authority safeguarding audit have been dealt with promptly and efficiently. The school meets the latest government requirements on safeguarding. School leaders and staff promote equality satisfactorily. Any rare incident of discrimination is investigated appropriately.

Senior leaders are fully aware of the differences in performance between boys and girls and have taken successful action to close the gap. The curriculum is broad, balanced and promotes pupils' learning, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, satisfactorily. However, there is insufficient emphasis on promoting pupils' multicultural knowledge and understanding. The curriculum is enhanced by a suitable range of after-school activities, visits and visitors to the school. The clear vision for the development of the school, the commitment of all stakeholders and the positive impact of actions already taken confirm that the school has the capacity to improve further.

## 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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 April 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Our Lady's Catholic Primary School, Chesham Bois,  
Amersham, HP6 5PL**

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school, and for completing the questionnaire. We enjoyed our visit and talking to you. You were very polite.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. Overall, your progress and achievement are satisfactory. By the end of Year 6, your attainment is above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the standards you reach in writing are not yet as high as those in reading and mathematics. In our discussions, you told us that you enjoy school and feel safe because the staff look after you. You know that you can turn to them if you are worried. Your behaviour is satisfactory and is improving. You are beginning to take more responsibility for yourselves and to show a greater interest in your work. Your attendance is also improving and is now above average. Well done – keep it up!

We have asked the school to help you to make better progress and reach higher standards, especially in writing, by:

- making better use of assessment information to plan lessons that are pitched at the right level for you, giving you more opportunities to develop your writing skills in other lessons and giving you clearer guidance on how to improve your work
- developing the role of middle leaders and the governing body in leading the school.

Please remember that to make your school better, you must always try your best.

Yours sincerely

David Wynford Jones  
Lead inspector

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