

Inspection of Our Lady Catholic Primary School

Woodhall Lane, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL7 3TF

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 October 2021

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Our Lady Catholic Primary School is a happy and inclusive place. Pupils love going to school. Pupils encourage and support each other so that children of all ages and abilities thrive. Pupils have a good understanding of what bullying is. They all agree that it doesn't happen at their school. Pupils do not tolerate any form of discrimination. They value each other's differences, whether religious, cultural or the way they live.

Leaders have made the curriculum ambitious for all pupils and expectations are high. They have prioritised bringing back opportunities for pupils to take part in sporting, social and cultural activities. Leaders make sure that these are available to all pupils. This means that pupils are part of a busy and vibrant environment.

Staff and pupils get on well together. Pupils like their teachers and know that their teachers enjoy working with them. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is of a consistently high standard.

Pupils enjoy the variety of subjects they study, and their positive attitudes help them to learn. An overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, would recommend this school to other parents.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have created an ambitious curriculum that sets out clearly what pupils should learn and when. This means teachers can plan well to build on what pupils have learned before. Teachers help pupils to revise previously learned knowledge before introducing new concepts. This helps pupils to remember what they have been taught before and to make links with new content.

Overall, teachers present information to pupils clearly. On occasion, teachers do not have the subject knowledge to pick up mistakes that pupils make. This is because not all curriculum leaders have had recent training about their subjects. As a result, plans are not as detailed as they could be. They do not effectively support teachers who are not experts in those subjects.

In early years, leaders have prioritised the teaching of phonics, reading and early mathematics. Children are taught to read as soon as they start in early years. They learn new sounds in an order that quickly helps them to read simple words. The early years curriculum is well thought through to help children progress in all areas so that they are ready to start Year 1.

High expectations and clear routines mean that children have settled quickly into the Nursery and Reception Year. This means that daily 'carpet time' is used effectively to teach children phonics and mathematical concepts. Leaders design purposeful activities for 'free play' that support this, for example to encourage children to apply number skills or practise their writing. Children take part in these

activities with enthusiasm. Adults observe and track the progress of all children with care. Because of this, adults can identify swiftly which children would benefit from help.

Whole-class reading books are chosen to help foster pupils' love of reading. Leaders ensure that the books they read with pupils expose them to a rich and varied vocabulary. These include stories from a range of different cultures. Leaders use these texts to promote the fundamental British values of tolerance and respect.

Leaders' programme for pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. It ties together relationships education, religious education and the wider curriculum effectively. As a result, pupils embody British values. They are given opportunities to debate issues such as gender stereotyping, the environment and how to manage healthy relationships. Pupils also take part in a wide range of physical activity in lessons, after school and on the playground. Play leaders from the older years organise activities at lunchtimes. Pupils take these responsibilities very seriously.

High-quality early assessment helped leaders to identify where learning had been lost during the COVID-19 pandemic. Prompt action to address gaps in learning means that most pupils are already back on track in mathematics and English. Teachers frequently check what pupils know so that they can spot where pupils still need extra help.

Staff support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. Pupils' needs are accurately identified by the special educational needs coordinator. Ways to support pupils with SEND are planned with parents and shared with teachers. This means that teachers have the information they need so they can successfully support pupils with SEND to access the curriculum.

Staff, parents, and pupils describe their school as 'a community' and 'a family'. Staff feel valued and respected by school leaders. They feel that leaders always take their well-being into account.

Governors are very much part of the school community. They play an active role in the life of the school as well as undertake their role as strategic leaders. They visit regularly and talk to staff, pupils and parents about how they can help make Our Lady an even better place to learn.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding records are thorough and well maintained. Strong communication between staff means that concerns are shared without delay. Staff receive regular safeguarding updates. As a result, teachers feel well informed about safeguarding

matters. Staff have the skills and knowledge they need to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm.

When a safeguarding issue occurs, leaders act quickly. They provide effective support for vulnerable children. When families need expert help, they will pursue extra support from outside agencies.

Leaders have planned a curriculum that teaches pupils how to stay safe when out in the community and when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Subject leaders' knowledge is not always precise enough. As a result, not all curriculum plans have the detail needed to support teachers to identify misconceptions. Leaders need to ensure that subject leaders receive the professional development they need to further improve the quality of education.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 117464 |
| Local authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10200511 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 196 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Kelly Donkor |
| Headteacher | Richard Curry |
| Website | www.ourlady527.herts.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 5 and 6 December 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the school is led by a new headteacher and deputy headteacher.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, subject leaders and the special educational needs coordinator.
- Meetings were held with the chair and members of the local governing body, and a representative from the local authority.

- Discussions were held with teachers and support staff about what it is like to work at the school. Different groups of pupils gave their views on what it is like to be a pupil at the school.
- Inspectors focused on reading, mathematics, English, science, art, and relationships, sex and health education. This included lesson visits, accompanied by subject leaders or senior leaders. Inspectors also looked at examples of pupils' work in these and other subjects.
- Inspectors visited other lessons and walked around the school at different times of the day to check on behaviour and conduct.
- Inspectors considered the 57 responses to the online parent questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and the 16 responses to the staff survey.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school's curriculum, plans for improvement, and attendance and behaviour records.
- Safeguarding arrangements were reviewed by checking the school's approach to staff recruitment, scrutinising policy documents and meeting with the designated safeguarding lead.

Inspection team

Lesley Daniel, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Damian Loneragan

Her Majesty's Inspector

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