



Inspection report

Our Lady of Lourdes RC Primary School

Unique Reference Number 105245
LEA Bolton

Inspection number 273612
Inspection dates 28 February and 1 March 2005
Reporting inspector Mrs J Austin HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Type of School	Primary	School address	Beech Avenue
School category	Voluntary Aided		Farnworth
	<i>Diocese of Salford</i>		Bolton
Age range of pupils	4 to 11 years		BL4 0BP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01204 333181
Number on roll	148	Fax number	01204 333182
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr B Carney
Date of previous inspection	October 2003	Acting Headteacher	Mr S Bramwell

Age group	Published	Reference no.
4 to 11 years	20 April 2005	273612

Introduction

When Our Lady of Lourdes RC Primary School was inspected in October 2003, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools (HMI) subsequently visited the school on three occasions to monitor its progress, and reinspected the school in March 2005.

Description of the school

Our Lady of Lourdes RC Primary School serves a parish in Farnworth, close to Bolton. The school is smaller than average with 148 pupils on roll; the pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. The percentage of the pupils eligible for free school meals is in line with the national average. The proportion of the pupils who have special educational needs is broadly average. There are 11 pupils for whom English is an additional language; four are at the early stages of learning it. Five pupils are from refugee families. A larger than average number of pupils join and leave the school during the academic year. When the pupils first start school their attainment is in line with that expected for their age. The school has experienced considerable staffing difficulties in the last two years. It has been without a substantive headteacher since July 2003. The creation of an informal federation with a local primary school has addressed this difficulty effectively; the headteacher has led both schools for four terms. A permanent headteacher has been appointed from April 2005. All but two of the teaching staff are new this year.

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Overall effectiveness of the school

In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils.

Our Lady of Lourdes RC Primary School has experienced a period of considerable turbulence, largely as the result of an almost complete change in the composition of the teaching force. Nevertheless, with resolute and purposeful leadership from the acting headteacher, and hard work from the teachers, the school is providing a sound education for its pupils. Overall, standards are below national averages, and below what they should be, but they are rising as a consequence of teaching that is at least satisfactory. Over the last year the pupils have developed much better work habits and their attitudes and behaviour are good. The curriculum has been redesigned to take account of the mixed-age classes; it meets national requirements. There is an ample range of opportunities for the pupils to participate in extracurricular activities.

Improvement since the last inspection

The inspection of October 2003 required the school to address key issues concerned with leadership and management, standards of attainment, the quality of teaching and assessment and the design of the curriculum. There has been good progress in relation to leadership and management and the curriculum; progress elsewhere is satisfactory, although standards are too low. Improvements in the pupils' attitudes and behaviour and the quality of the learning environment have contributed positively to the school's overall progress.

Capacity to improve

The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory. Staff work well together, sharing a sense of purpose; morale is high. The deputy headteacher, who knows the school well, has been appointed as the substantive headteacher and will take up the post next term. The co-ordinators have a common understanding of their responsibilities, although their roles are generally underdeveloped. The governing body is taking appropriate responsibility for the leadership of the school. Suitable systems for monitoring and evaluating all the areas of the school's practice have been established and, as a result, the school's planning for improvement is soundly based. The local education authority (LEA) is committed to continuing its development work with the school and has sound plans for supporting the new, inexperienced senior leadership team.

What the school should do to improve further

The school's development plan recognises the areas where improvement is needed. However the key priorities are to:

- continue to raise standards in English, mathematics and science, particularly for the more-able pupils;
- fully embed an effective system for assessing and tracking the pupils' progress;
- develop the roles of the subject co-ordinators.

Achievement and standards

When the pupils enter the reception class their performance is broadly in line with that expected for their age. They make at least satisfactory progress in all areas of learning and enjoy being in school. Over recent terms, the pupils' progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 has been satisfactory, and sometimes good, but weaknesses in past provision have led to underachievement at Key Stage 2. This is reflected in the results of the national tests which, although below the national average at Key Stage 1, were in line with the performance of similar schools, unlike at Key Stage 2. Too few of the more-able pupils achieve standards above the national average. The performance of girls lags behind that of the boys.

During the inspection, the pupils made at least satisfactory progress in their lessons in both key stages. In just under half of the lessons the pupils made good, and occasionally very good, progress. Most of these lessons were at Key Stage 1. The achievement of the pupils with particular learning difficulties, refugees and those learning English as an additional language was satisfactory because they were supported effectively in lessons.

Personal development

The personal development of the pupils is good. They like coming to school, feel safe and as a result attendance levels are satisfactory. The pupils arrive punctually and settle quickly to their work. The pupils' attitudes to work are good. They are keen to contribute to whole-class sessions, apply themselves diligently to tasks and present their work well. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is generally good and sometimes very good. The pupils are polite and courteous and they follow routines well. The school council, house system and peer-pals scheme provide suitable opportunities for the pupils to exercise responsibility; they treat these seriously.

The school is working towards the healthy schools' award. Snacks of fresh fruit and vegetables are available at playtimes and the pupils have continuous access to drinking water. A new, stimulating outdoor play area is under construction.

The provision for the pupil's spiritual, moral and social development is good. The pupils collaborate and play together admirably and opportunities to take part in competitive sporting events have increased. Educational trips in the local and wider community are undertaken and a suitable range of well-attended extracurricular activities is provided. Daily acts of collective worship and assemblies make a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual development. The school recognises that its provision to promote the pupils' understanding of the multicultural nature of the community is insufficiently developed.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall; it was never less than satisfactory and in just under half of the lessons it was good or better. This is a significant improvement when compared with the profile of teaching in 2003.

Lessons were well planned. Outlines included details of the work of the teaching assistants, and described activities that were well matched to the needs of different groups of pupils. However, the lesson objectives did not consistently focus on learning outcomes. Resources, notably the interactive whiteboards, were used effectively to stimulate the pupils' interest. The teaching assistants have benefited from recent training and they worked successfully with the pupils, whom they know well. The staff commonly used praise and rewards to good effect. Questioning was successfully employed to assess the pupils' knowledge and understanding and to enable them to practice their speaking and listening skills. Appropriate classroom routines have been established and the pupils' responded to these well; little time was lost in changes of activity.

A coherent system for the regular assessment and tracking of the pupils' progress has been introduced. Well-founded data is used efficiently to set targets in the core subjects for each pupil. The school has begun to analyse the results of a range of tests and tasks, tracking the pupils' progress towards their targets and identifying those pupils who are underachieving; however, this work is at an early stage of development.

The curriculum is broad, balanced and based on national requirements. It takes appropriate account of the pupils' progression through the mixed-age classes. At Key Stage 2, a thematic approach to delivering the foundation subjects has been adopted. This helps the pupils make connections between the various areas of learning. All classes study the same topic over a similar period, providing a common focus and the benefit of shared enrichment activities. High quality music provision, both within and outside the curriculum, is supplied by the LEA's peripatetic service.

The school provides good care for its pupils. Adults are sensitive to their needs and well-being. Relationships between adults and pupils are trusting, warm and friendly. The pupils feel secure at school and appreciate the support they receive. Child protection, and health and safety procedures are well documented. Parents receive clear information, at suitable intervals throughout the year, about the progress their children are making. They are welcomed into the school; there are frequent, regular opportunities, both formal and informal, for discussing concerns about their children. The links between the school and the

parish are well established and sustained, in part, through shared events including worship, concerts and productions, in which the pupils participate.

Leadership and management

The acting headteacher is providing strong, effective leadership with an unequivocal focus on raising standards by improving the overall quality of the school's provision. He gained the rapid commitment of the staff to this aim by articulating it clearly, creating an appropriate environment for learning and securing well-targeted training and support. The effective collaboration between the acting headteacher and the deputy headteacher has been critical in ensuring that there has been neither a dilution of, nor confusion about, the school's direction. The staffing stability achieved this year has enabled a suitable middle-management structure to be established. Following training, the co-ordinators have a shared understanding of their roles, but the knowledge and skills to fulfil these require further development. The school has a realistic view of its strengths and weaknesses because its evaluation procedures are sound. Appropriate priorities for the school's development have been identified.

The governing body, ably led by the chair, is playing an appropriate part in the leadership of the school. Strengthened membership, a revised committee structure and relevant training have enabled the governing body to develop its role as a critical friend to the school. It has monitored the progress of the action plan efficiently and successfully recruited a headteacher.

The LEA has provided the school with considerable, well-targeted support. This has helped the school to establish its monitoring procedures; promoted good practice in teaching and learning; guided subject co-ordinators in determining their priorities for development; and supported the establishment of a stimulating Foundation Stage learning environment.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

Our Lady of Lourdes RC Primary School was inspected in October 2003 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in March, June and December 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of October 2003.

In March 2005, two HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

During the visit 16 parts of lessons and five registration sessions were inspected. The pupils' conduct was observed around the school and on the playground at break and lunchtimes, and samples of their work were inspected. Discussions were held with the acting headteacher, the headteacher designate, the chair of governors, a representative from the LEA and informally with other staff. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of October 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

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