



Inspection report

Our Lady's Catholic Primary School

Unique Reference Number 113448
LEA Devon

Inspection number 274783
Inspection dates 3 and 4 May 2005
Reporting inspector Ms A Baird 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	Chanters Hill
School category	Voluntary Aided		Barnstaple
	<i>Diocese of Plymouth</i>		Devon
Age range of pupils	4 to 11 years		EX32 8DN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01271 345164
Number on roll	209	Fax number	01271 345164
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Dr R O'Donovan
Date of previous inspection	February 2004	Headteacher	Mrs P Davey

Age group	Published	Reference no.
4 to 11 years	10 June 2005	274783

Introduction

When Our Lady's Catholic Primary School was inspected in February 2004, 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 two occasions to monitor its progress, and reinspected the school in May 2005.

Description of the school

Our Lady's Catholic Primary School is situated in Barnstaple close to the town centre. It draws its pupils from a very wide area. It has 204 pupils on roll, almost all of whom are from white British backgrounds. About ten per cent of the pupils are entitled to free school meals. Ten per cent of the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, which is well below the national average. Six pupils have a formal Statement of Special Educational Need, which is above the national average.

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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's Catholic Primary School is an effective school which now benefits from a stable staffing. The headteacher provides good leadership and she is ably supported by the deputy headteacher. They have developed a range of systems which are gradually improving the provision. Some of the subject leaders are new to their roles, but appropriate training has been given and they are making sound progress. The school provides a good education for its pupils and, as its systems become embedded, further improvements are being implemented.

Standards across the school are rising. A number of the Year 6 pupils suffer from weaknesses in the provision they received in previous years. However, they have made good progress over this last year and their standards are closer to the expected levels for their age. The school has given a good focus to improving the pupils' skills in English, mathematics and science; in general, progress in these subjects is at least sound. However, in a few classes insufficient attention is paid to the pupils' progress in other subjects and the work they complete is not carefully marked or assessed. The youngest pupils, in the reception class, have benefited from the improvements to the learning environment, including the outside play area; these have had a positive effect on the provision. Although these pupils make generally sound progress in working towards the nationally set Early Learning Goals, their skills in writing and recording are developing slowly; the most able do not regularly produce well-formed letters and short sentences independently. Across the school, the pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. They have an eagerness to learn, particularly when they are stimulated by interesting resources and by having real problems to solve. The curriculum meets national requirements though the foundation subjects do not have a high enough profile in the programme of work or in promoting literacy and numeracy.

Improvement since the last inspection

The inspection of February 2004 required the school to address key issues concerned with: assessment and ensuring the pupils reach the levels they should; teaching and learning; management systems; and the curriculum in all subjects and for the pupils in the Foundation Stage. In addition, there were training issues identified in the implementation of the school's procedures for child protection. Satisfactory progress has been made in assessment and in the curriculum for the pupils in Years 1 to 6. Good progress has been made in relation to management systems, teaching and learning, and in ensuring the Foundation Stage curriculum meets statutory requirements. All issues pertaining to child safety have been satisfactorily addressed.

Capacity to improve

The school is well placed to continue to improve. The headteacher has been instrumental in moving the school forward and has been rigorous in overseeing the implementation of the

school's action plan. The weaknesses that were identified in the previous inspection have been systematically tackled and the quality of education has been enhanced. Overall, teaching and learning are good; where teaching and learning are satisfactory, they are secure at that level. The school's assessment procedures are being used more effectively to highlight progress over time and track the pupils' levels of attainment. However, the information is not always used to direct the teaching sufficiently well to the pupils' different learning needs, particularly the more able. Subject leaders are developing their skills in overseeing planning and scrutinising the pupils' written work and they provide good feedback to teachers on areas for development. However, they are not yet fully involved in working with or observing other teachers to share good practice and to evaluate progress across the school. The procedure for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by the headteacher is regular and methodical and has had an impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

What the school should do to improve further

The key priorities for the school's development plan are to:

- continue to raise standards in English, mathematics and science;
- raise standards in all other subjects and use assessments more regularly to inform planning;
- ensure that all pupils, particularly the more able and those in the Foundation Stage, are sufficiently challenged in their work;
- improve the contribution of the foundation subjects to the development of the pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy.

Achievement and standards

The provision in the Foundation Stage has improved since the inspection in 2004; there has been a good focus on developing the learning environment, both outdoors and indoors. The pupils have made sound progress in working towards many of the Early Learning Goals; they understand the purpose of books and are familiar with story-related language; a few read independently. However, their skills in writing and recording are developing slowly; the most able do not regularly produce well-formed letters and short sentences independently, and the standards they achieve do not reflect their capability. In other classes, the pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science is at least sound; it is often good, particularly at Key Stage 2. Weaknesses in past provision have led to underachievement for many pupils especially those in Year 6. Although these pupils have made good progress during this academic year they are unlikely to achieve their targets in the National Curriculum tests in 2005. The school is aware of this and has appropriately targeted support for those pupils who require it. However, despite the good teaching, the results in the national tests are not likely to improve over those of the previous year.

Personal development

The pupils behave well in lessons; they listen carefully to instructions and show a good level of responsibility in managing their time and organising their work. Their behaviour at playtimes is considerate and they move around the school sensibly and quietly. The pupils show respect for each other and are polite and courteous; relationships are good within the classrooms, around the school and with teachers.

There are effective systems to promote and reward good behaviour, and all staff are consistent in their expectations of acceptable standards. Good behaviour is praised during lessons. There have been no exclusions from the school during the last 12 months.

The pupils' attitude towards their work is good and they work well individually and collaboratively. When working in pairs and groups they show consideration for others' points of view and take turns when required. They display independence, work hard to complete the tasks which they are set, and take care over how their work is presented.

The school has been successful in improving attendance; this is no longer below the national figure. Unauthorised absence is closely monitored and occurs infrequently.

The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There is a strong emphasis on caring for each other and the pupils learn to exercise personal responsibility. The older pupils look after the younger pupils; for example, by sharing reading activities with those in the reception year. Responsibilities for playground equipment and the tidiness of the school site are shared by the pupils. Assemblies are an important part of the life of the school and provide good opportunities for spiritual reflection, celebrating pupils' successes, and joining together in singing and prayers.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is good overall. It was good in eight lessons and satisfactory in six. The staff have benefited from a comprehensive range of support and guidance and this has improved the quality of teaching. The teachers planned carefully. They used a good variety of resources, such as information and communication technology, to interest and involve the pupils in their learning. In the best lessons, the pupils discussed and shared their ideas with each other. In some of the less successful lessons, there was a lack of clarity regarding the tasks the pupils completed. The needs of the higher achieving pupils were not always fully addressed. On occasion, the pupils were not given sufficient opportunity or time to offer their own ideas.

The school's systems for assessing and tracking the pupils' progress are sound; more information is available for the staff to know how well the pupils are doing. However, the information is not always used to direct the teaching sufficiently accurately to the pupils' different learning needs, particularly the more able. Some good systems have been developed in Year 6; such as, the dialogue with pupils when the teacher marks their work. In some classes, the work completed in the foundation subjects is not regularly marked.

The school is developing a broadly based curriculum which ensures coverage of the National Curriculum and includes some extracurricular activities for the older pupils. Educational visits and visitors to the school enrich the curriculum. At both key stages, relevant use is made of national materials to teach skills in literacy and numeracy. Appropriate attention is given to learning basic skills although the contribution of the foundation subjects in this respect is underdeveloped.

Curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage forms the basis for activities in the reception year. The learning environment is being developed to provide better access to resources and to give pupils more independence in the choices they make.

The pupils who have special educational needs, especially those with statements, are very well supported by learning assistants in lessons. They are given good opportunities for practical work with a good range of resources to help consolidate their learning. Consequently, they generally make good progress.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has worked hard to eradicate the weaknesses at the school. She has formed a productive relationship with the local education authority (LEA) and has benefited from its support and guidance. However, she has become increasingly independent in highlighting the actions the school needs to take and has effectively tackled a challenging agenda for improvement. She is ably supported by the deputy headteacher, and together they form a very strong team that is proactive in identifying where future improvements need to take place. The leaders in the core subjects are developing clear systems to monitor and evaluate standards and provision and these are being shared with each other and the governing body's monitoring committee. The recently appointed special educational needs co-ordinator has made a good start and is increasingly knowledgeable about the provision. The systems for monitoring and evaluating the pupils' progress in the foundation subjects are less well developed. The staff support the headteacher and each other and have formed a cohesive team. The school's self-evaluation is very good and has a clear focus on the impact of the actions taken.

The governing body has fully embraced its role in taking responsibility for supporting and challenging the school over improvement. Reports from subject leaders and governors' visits to school are good developments.

The LEA has provided good levels of support; the assigned adviser knows the school and its staff well. He has encouraged the school to move towards autonomy while keeping a close watch on the progress being made. Regular reviews have been helpful in identifying the progress made and where future actions should be targeted. The range of additional subject-related support offered by the LEA has been well received and has had a good impact. The LEA has accurately identified the further support the school will need.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

Our Lady's Catholic Primary School was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in February 2004. 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 September 2004 and in January 2005 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of February 2004.

In May 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.

Fourteen parts of lessons and one assembly 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 headteacher, the chair of governors, and a representative from the LEA, and 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 areas for improvement in the inspection report of February 2004 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

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