



Guardian Angels Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103420
LEA Birmingham
Inspection number 276914
Inspection dates 24 January 2006 to 24 January 2006
Reporting inspector Julia Coop AI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Hurst Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Birmingham
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		West Midlands B34 7HN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 7472782
Number on roll	133	Fax number	0121 7493004
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Andrew Burton
Date of previous inspection	14 February 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Naughton

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Guardian Angels is a small Catholic primary school serving a disadvantaged area of Birmingham. Pupil numbers are rising. A significant number of pupils join the school at other than the usual times. A high proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average, but no pupils are in the early stages of learning to speak English. There is an above average number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Attainment on entry to the school is below average. The school had been without a permanent headteacher for a year, prior to the appointment of the present headteacher in 2005.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's judgment that this is a satisfactory and improving school that gives satisfactory value for money. It has been through an unsettled period. With a new headteacher, the school is growing in popularity among parents and pupil numbers are rising. The school is well placed to continue to improve.

The school knows that, for a time, standards declined and pupils were not making enough progress. Working effectively in partnership with external consultants and partner schools, this decline has been successfully reversed. Children in the Reception class now make good progress because of effective team work in the class. As a result, children reach expected standards at the end of the Reception year. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 are now making satisfactory progress because teaching has improved and is satisfactory. Some teaching is good, but more able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are provided with the right sort of help and make sound progress.

The school is a harmonious, happy and caring place where new pupils are welcomed and valued. Pupils are well behaved and enjoy learning. The curriculum is satisfactory with a good range of additional activities. Attendance levels are below average and there are too many unexplained absences. The school could be doing more to promote regular attendance through working with parents and checking on how this affects individual pupils' learning.

The leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher's good leadership and management and the support of effective governors are moving the school forward at a fast rate. They have an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. They know that more rigorous checking of pupil progress is required in particular to check that more able pupils achieve as well as they should. Most subject leaders are not yet skilled enough to improve teaching and learning in their subjects. The school has recognised that it is a key area for improvement if standards are to rise further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to raise standards, particularly for the more able pupils, using assessment information better to track progress and plan work.
- Ensure subject leaders contribute more to raising standards and to improving the effectiveness of teaching in their subjects.
- Work more closely with parents to improve attendance and monitor any impact on learning more carefully.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement overall is satisfactory and standards are broadly in line with national averages. Children join the Reception class with below average skills. By the time they start in Year 1, most reach the levels expected in all areas of learning. They make good

progress because of the encouragement and support they receive from an effective team of staff.

In Year 6, standards declined significantly in 2004. The school knows that the progress made by pupils at that time was inadequate. In the 2005 national tests in Year 6, standards were average and pupils' performance improved considerably in comparison to the previous year. The school met its modest targets, but not enough pupils reached the higher levels in the tests. Improvements to standards are being maintained and where teaching is strong, especially in Year 6, pupils are making good progress. But there is still a lot of ground to make up if the pupils are to meet the more challenging targets set this year.

In other classes, improvements in teaching mean that pupils now make satisfactory progress. The significant number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive good support and also make satisfactory progress in lessons. Pupils new to the school and from minority ethnic groups are welcomed, well supported and make satisfactory progress. However, the school recognises that there needs to be more consistently good teaching and higher expectations in all classes if standards are to continue to improve and ensure that all pupils, particularly the more able, do as well as they can.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. Qualities of self-respect, compassion and fair play are strongly promoted. All pupils behave well, have good attitudes and are exceptionally polite to visitors. Reception children are happy and quickly develop confidence to make sensible choices. Pupils enjoy school saying 'it's a brilliant place for learning now'. A strength is the way that every pupil shows respect for friends from different cultures. Consequently, there are good relationships throughout the school and the school is justifiably proud of its harmonious atmosphere.

Pupils understand how to keep safe and healthy. They enjoy fresh fruit daily and know what makes a healthy lunch box. They recognise the importance of exercise and keeping safe and readily go to their named helper if they are troubled. Pupils are increasingly involved in the life of the school and take on responsibilities such as being a 'friendship buddy' sensibly. They work co-operatively, take part in many community events and have sound basic skills. Thus, they are developing appropriate skills that will contribute to later life. Attendance is improving, but a significant number of pupils still miss school without parents and carers giving a good reason. The school does not follow this up carefully enough or identify if this has any impact on learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving due to carefully targeted training and support. However, most subject leaders are not yet skilled enough to help the headteacher improve teaching and learning. Some teaching is good. However, the quality is not yet consistent across all year groups. This hampers learning and the school's drive to raise overall standards.

In the best lessons, for example, in Year 6, activities are carefully planned and challenging. In an English lesson, opportunities to explore newspaper headlines and write reports really grab the pupils' attention, so that pupils say that 'literacy is hard, but really fun now'. In other classes, work is not always adjusted well enough to meet the needs of more able pupils. They are too often expected to do the same work as other pupils and this slows their progress. Teachers have worked hard to ensure displays and imaginative book corners are enticing pupils to learn. Recent reorganisation of resources is making the job of teaching easier and enabling the children to learn better. As a result, pupils try hard to do well and say that 'we enjoy reading now'.

Teaching assistants support learning well. The assistant in the reception class has very good knowledge of the way young children learn and this is used extremely well to support teaching and learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities get good support, especially when working in small groups, and this helps them make sound progress.

Pupils have good relationships with their teachers and new pupils are helped to settle in quickly. Pupils respond well to the marking in their books. They like having learning targets and say they are helping them to learn. However, the targets, currently stuck into books, could be more accessible to help learning even more.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and improving. Computers are used effectively to support learning. By employing specialist staff, the school has raised the profile of music and dance.

The skills of teaching assistants are used well to teach aspects of personal, social and health education. This helps to ensure that pupils' personal development is enhanced through strong teaching about relationships and making sensible choices in life. The good range of practical activities in the reception class ensures the youngest children get off to a flying start.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those experiencing difficulties in their lives receive good support. They like the special help they get in small groups. In contrast, the school knows there is more to do to ensure that more able pupils and those with special talents are as effectively and consistently supported.

Pupils say they 'love the extra bits' of school which are planned for them such as the after school clubs and the residential visit. These contribute successfully to personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care and guidance are satisfactory. Staff look after pupils well and care about their well-being. The free breakfast club, attended by up to 80 pupils, has helped improve the punctuality of some pupils and ensures they get off to a healthy start. Child protection and health and safety procedures are securely in place with training needs currently being reviewed.

The school has high expectations of behaviour and attitudes and every effort is made to create a community spirit. This means that new pupils and those with a particular need are cared for well. Relationships are a strength, underpinning consistently supportive care arrangements. Pupils like the new initiative which encourages them to turn to an adult they have nominated should the need arise. There is a clear policy on marking but this is not yet consistently followed in all year groups. Absences are recorded properly but systems to check why pupils are absent and the impact of this on their progress are not as rigorous as they could be.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The main reason why standards are rising is the good leadership and management of the headteacher. She quickly gauged where improvements were needed and gained effective support from external consultants and partner schools. Fresh ideas are successfully helping to move the school forward.

Staff welcome this renewed sense of direction. There is a good agenda for school improvement which is focused on the right areas.

There is a recognition that subject leaders and some senior leaders require further training if they are to be effective in supporting the headteacher in her drive to improve the school further.

The school celebrates the diversity of the community it serves and is the hub of the local neighbourhood. It welcomes newcomers whatever their ability or background. Pupils and parents are consulted regularly and feel very much part of the school. As a result, the school's reputation is improving and pupil numbers rising. Governors are supportive. Recent training means they are now confident to fulfil their roles and to ask searching questions. They support the headteacher effectively. Substantial improvements to the learning environment and resources and to the curriculum and teaching are having a positive impact on learning. The swift attention to these matters has put the school in a good position to build on its recent successes and to improve further.

The school recognises that many initiatives are new and knows that there is more to do to raise standards. The school has a wealth of data about how well pupils are doing. However, the current tracking system does not enable the information to be used as fully as it might to identify how well different groups are doing and so aid planning.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being so polite and friendly when we visited your school. Your school is looking lovely with the displays and new book corners and we know you like your new look school very much. We agree with you that it is a happy and friendly school. We also think there are other good things happening at Guardian Angels which we want to share with you:

- you are looked after well and the school keeps you safe
- you behave well and value each other's differences. Keep it up
- you work hard and enjoy learning
- your headteacher and governors run the school well so there have been a lot of good changes recently
- there are lots of interesting extra activities planned for you.

These are some of the things that need to be improved and we hope that you will help your teachers in these things:

- some of you could do even better in your work; we have asked the teachers to make some work harder and more interesting for you
- your teachers could help the headteacher more in her work
- some of you take too many days off school and you are missing out on lessons.

Keep up all of your hard work.