



Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106774
LEA Doncaster
Inspection number 277629
Inspection dates 22 February 2006 to 23 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Linda Murphy CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Mere Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Armthorpe
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN3 2DB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01302 833941
Number on roll	125	Fax number	01302 300625
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr G Nolan
Date of previous inspection	3 July 2000	Headteacher	Mr J McChrystal

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school serves the parishes of Armthorpe and Kirksandall, near Doncaster. Most pupils are of white British heritage, with a small proportion from Travellers' families. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those entitled to free school meals is below average. The pupils' attainment on entry is broadly typical for their age. Since the last inspection there has been a high turnover of staff.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It has the full confidence of parents who value the very caring Christian ethos and sense of community which fosters pupils' personal development. Sound links with partner schools and external agencies broaden pupils' learning. The care, support and guidance given to pupils are satisfactory. There are particular strengths in the moral and spiritual guidance the school provides.

Standards are broadly average throughout the school. They have dipped since the last inspection, in part because of a series of staffing changes. More stable staffing and improved monitoring and self-evaluation have led the school to identify what needs to be done to improve pupils' attainment. Self-evaluation is mostly accurate and based on sound monitoring; a weakness is the monitoring of attendance. Pupils' attendance is broadly average, although it has declined in recent years. Actions taken by the school to improve the challenge for higher attainers are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' satisfactory, and sometimes good, progress seen in lessons. However, assessment information is not used sufficiently to identify challenging targets to improve standards, particularly of higher attaining pupils. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and improving. The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory. These are built upon in Year 1 to Year 6 through satisfactory teaching and learning, based on an interesting curriculum.

Leadership and management, including governance, are satisfactory. The headteacher calmly and methodically leads the staff with effective support from the deputy headteacher and subject leaders. Governors are well informed and are becoming more adept at offering a balance of support and challenge to the school. The school provides sound value for money. The positive steps taken over the last year to raise standards show that the school has the capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of information from assessments to accelerate the learning of the higher attainers and improve standards generally.
- Develop the systems for checking and maximising attendance so that pupils fully benefit from the school's efforts to raise standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils enter the Reception class with standards that are broadly typical for their age. Pupils make sound progress at each stage of their learning and attain average standards by the end of Reception, Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make satisfactory progress: they often benefit from working in small groups. Pupils mostly meet their targets at the expected level for their age but the overall standards are brought down because too few pupils attain highly in class or, as shown in the school's results, in the national tests in 2005 at Year 2 and Year 6.

Pupils from Traveller's families do as well as other pupils when they are at school. The school has correctly identified what needs to be done to raise standards and understands how vital it is to make better use of assessment information to set more challenging targets for higher attainers. Improvement since the previous inspection has been hampered by high staff turnover. This has led to fluctuations in standards and achievement, which are not as good as they were in 2000. Action has already begun to secure improvement and the school is making satisfactory headway in raising standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. The school over-estimated this aspect of learning because it took insufficient account of attendance. Although attendance is broadly average it is declining because arrangements to ensure improvement are insufficiently robust. There are strengths, however; for example, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a good understanding of the richness of world cultures, much respect for others and a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Spirituality is strong and faith is a strong aspect of pupils' daily lives. Pupils enjoy their lessons. They say 'teachers make our school fun and exciting!' Behaviour is good and pupils are exceptionally courteous and friendly. Teachers ensure that pupils work safely. Fresh food served at lunch time, healthy snacks and a programme of sporting activities make effective contributions to pupils' healthy lifestyles. Pupils contribute well to school life through; for example, an effective school council. Pupils learn to listen to others and to discuss a point of view constructively. They have raised funds for play equipment, which provided the opportunity for teamwork. Older pupils have recently trained to become 'playtime leaders' which gave the opportunity to further develop their responsibilities and social skills. These developing skills help to prepare them for their future life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is satisfactory overall. Although there is good teaching in some classes, pupils' progress over time shows that the quality of teaching has not always been as strong as it should be. Expectations have generally been too low and teaching has not concentrated on the higher attainers sufficiently well. Teachers are now clear about the school's priorities and are paying closer attention to the needs of the higher attainers. Although the pitch of work is not yet completely challenging for this group, expectations have been raised. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to support learning in many lessons. Teaching assistants are carefully deployed to support the learners, although at times this detracts from the pupils' ability to work independently. Relationships are good

and pupils behave well so they are ready to learn. Classrooms are conducive to learning, routines are established and teaching often sets a good pace. Questioning to individuals is thorough and marking is of good quality. Individual plans for the learning of pupils who need extra help are well structured and support their achievement effectively.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets the needs of most pupils. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and benefits from development in the arrangements for outdoor play: the sensory and secret gardens are stimulating and exciting features. The school looks for creative ways to support pupils' enjoyment and enrich their understanding for example through weeks set aside to study science and multiculturalism. Provision in ICT is strong and has a positive impact across the curriculum to support learning. Links between other subjects have not yet been fully explored to maximise the pupils' learning. Pupils benefit from the programme of personal, social and health education, which nurtures their well-being. A sound range of extra-curricular activities are well attended. Visits and visitors, as well as a growing number of residential trips enrich the pupils' experiences further.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school judges care, guidance and support to be good. Inspectors disagree, judging them to be satisfactory. This is because academic guidance through target setting for higher attainers is not a strength. A welcoming, calm environment helps pupils to concentrate on their learning. Arrangements for health and safety, including child protection, are well established and understood by staff. Pupils are taught how to lead healthy lifestyles and to keep safe. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is effective. Good support is provided for vulnerable pupils. Children from Travellers' families are also included well in what the school has to offer. Pupils are becoming increasingly involved in assessing their own learning, aided by whole school and whole class targets. The school has not yet fully developed procedures for agreeing individual targets for all pupils, to maximise their achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher promotes a caring and supportive ethos. As a result, pupils feel safe and valued and enjoy their days in school. Parents are pleased with what the school provides. The school meets its mission statement to promote 'close cooperation between home, school and parish and the wider community' and to provide a 'happy, stimulating and caring Catholic Christian environment in which each child feels confident, secure and valued'. Frequent changes in staffing have adversely affected pupils' achievement. This, together with the fact that the school has not always been sharp enough in the past in taking prompt action

to ensure consistently high standards, has meant that the quality of education has suffered since the last inspection. Staffing is now stable, and the school has correctly identified most instances where improvements are required to raise standards. A clear plan of action with well defined priorities is already being implemented with some success and standards in lessons are rising. The school's self-evaluation is largely secure and based on a range of regular monitoring and thoughtful action to bring about improvement. A weakness is the monitoring and promotion of attendance. Basic systems to use data about pupils' progress are in use; for example, to identify pupils who need extra help. They are only just beginning to be used to focus on the higher attainers. Governors have a clear understanding of what needs to be done next. They are guided effectively by the senior leadership team. The school is in a secure position to build upon its recent improvement.

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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?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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?	3	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	3	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	3	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	3	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 welcoming us to your school and being so polite and friendly. There is a welcoming and calm atmosphere that helps you to concentrate on your learning. Your teachers make sure you are safe and give you good guidance as you grow. As a result, you are thoughtful, kind and considerate: you can be proud of your good behaviour. You enjoy your lessons because teachers make them fun.

The school knows what to do to help you learn faster. Firstly, we have asked your headteacher and other teachers to set harder work for those of you who learn quickly so that you do even better. Secondly, we have asked the school to keep a good check on your attendance.

You and your families can help by making sure that you come to school every day and that you always try your best to succeed.