



# Our Lady Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 117476  
**LEA** HERTFORDSHIRE LEA  
**Inspection number** 280089  
**Inspection dates** 26 April 2006 to 27 April 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Geof Timms AI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Old Hale Way
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		SG5 1XT
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01462 622555
<b>Number on roll</b>	217	<b>Fax number</b>	01462 622777
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Ian McBain
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	4 July 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Gaynor Eden

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 26 April 2006 - 27 April 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 280089
-----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

---

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Our Lady Catholic Primary School serves the town of Hitchin and surrounding areas. The school is of average size and most children come from better than average social and economic backgrounds. The number eligible for free school meals is well below average. Most children are White British, but there is a wide range of children from other minority ethnic backgrounds. Twelve children receive support as they are at an early stage of acquiring English. The main other languages spoken are Italian, Spanish and French. The school has a small number of looked after children. The proportion of children with special educational needs is broadly average but was particularly high in the 2005 Year 6 cohort. The attainment on entry of most children is above that typically found.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 1**

This is an outstanding school, which is celebrating its centenary this year. It provides children with a very effective education. Consequently, pupils make good progress throughout the school and achieve high standards in a broad range of subjects. The school provides good value for money. Outstanding leadership and management and very effective teaching are principle reasons for the schools success. The school judges itself good, but it has improved greatly during the current headteachers tenure and continues to improve year by year. The strong Catholic ethos supports all of the work of the school and this is reflected in the excellent behaviour and very positive attitudes found among the children. Their personal development is outstanding and children are very effectively prepared for secondary school and adult life. The headteacher and senior staffs effectiveness in monitoring and improving teaching and learning is now very good and is having a major impact on the schools work. The school is working to raise standards in boys writing by encouraging good writing in a range of styles. Provision in the Foundation Stage is outstanding. Parents agree that their children have an excellent start to their school careers. Recent changes to the way targets are set for childrens learning are already proving helpful in raising standards but need to be further embedded in teachers day-to-day practice. The schools self evaluation is accurate. The teaching is good overall, with some that is of outstanding quality. The curriculum is well matched to pupils needs and has outstanding features that help promote high standards in many subjects, including information and communication technology (ICT), creative subjects and performing arts. This also forms an important part of the childrens outstanding spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. The improvements made since the last inspection demonstrate that the school has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Continue the schools work to raise boys standards in writing by providing opportunities for them to write well in a range of styles. - Ensure that the recently revised system of pupil target setting is securely embedded in everyday practice.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

The achievement in the school is good and standards are considerably above average. A key strength is the breadth of good achievement across many subjects. Most children enter the school with attainment slightly above average, although their personal and social skills are not as well developed. These aspects are consequently a major focus for the Reception teacher. By the time they leave the Reception class, children make outstanding progress and achieve levels above those expected for the end of their Reception year. This outstanding progress continues into Years 1 and 2. In 2005, Year 2 standards remained consistently high. Children, including those with learning or physical difficulties, make at least good progress throughout the school in English,

mathematics and science. Their speaking and listening skills are very well developed and reading levels are well above average. When aspects are identified as relatively weaker, they are quickly and very effectively addressed. For example, weaknesses in boys writing skills were identified in 2005 and a range of measures is in place to raise standards. Children with English as an additional language often make excellent progress. The 2006 targets set for pupils in Years 5 and 6 are significantly higher than those for 2005 and pupils in Year 6 are on track to achieve them. There are strengths in most other subjects, such as music and dance. The standards in ICT and art and design are also high. Children are taught Spanish from Year 2 and many reach a good standard by Year 6.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Childrens personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Children have exceptionally good attitudes towards their work and say that they enjoy coming to school because it is friendly and welcoming. Attendance is above the national average. Behaviour is excellent. Children say that there are very few instances of bullying or racism. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Children demonstrate very good care and consideration for each other, particularly in the support of younger children. Children have an excellent awareness of how to stay safe and enjoy healthy lifestyles. They have very good opportunities to take part in physical activity. Children acquire good standards of literacy, numeracy, and ICT, which prepare them well for the next stage of their learning. Pupils take on many responsibilities around the school and school councillors exercise a significant influence on the life and work of the school. For example, they are currently coordinating the planning for a quiet garden in the schools grounds. Children greatly enjoy working as a team to gain house points and raising money for a variety of charities, including a village in Uganda.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

There have been significant changes to the teaching staff recently. The quality of teaching is consistently good throughout the school and, at times, of outstanding quality. This view is shared by many of the parents. Childrens learning is often exceptional and they develop outstanding attitudes towards school from the start. The senior staff and subject leaders monitor the teaching and learning in depth, through a range of measures, and they give very evaluative and effective feedback that results in improved teaching skills and sharing of good practice. Teachers have used the centenary celebrations very effectively to plan for a wide range of exciting and interesting activities in different subjects. The relationships between children and staff have a major impact on the progress made in lessons. Teachers are very effective at asking good open questions and children are keen to answer. Teachers have high

expectations and children respond to these well. Teaching assistants are effective in supporting specific children and with providing general support for the teacher. Teachers have clear objectives for their teaching, and these are usually shared in sufficient detail with children. The recently revised target setting system enables children to be much more aware of what is expected of them and what they are to learn. However, this is yet to be firmly embedded in day-to-day practice in classrooms. Staff make good use of the interactive whiteboards and other technology.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is broad and varied and matches the needs of children very well. Provision in the Reception class is excellent and very effectively prepares them for their next stage of learning. Developments to stimulate the interest of boys in reading and writing have contributed very well to improving childrens progress. The school uses teaching and non-teaching staff members expertise and skills very effectively to enhance pupils learning. There is good support for children with learning difficulties and disabilities so that they achieve well. Children whose home language is not English are supported well by a visiting teacher. The programme of extra-curricular activities is outstanding, offering a wide range of clubs and activities for pupils that add to their enjoyment and promote achievement in subjects such as art, music, physical education and drama. Visits and visitors enhance the curriculum further and increase pupils enthusiasm for learning. Children particularly enjoy the themed days and weeks, such as Fitness Week.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school is a very caring community. The quality of care, guidance and support is good and children achieve well because of this. Child protection procedures are robust and careful attention is paid to health and safety issues. There are excellent relationships between children and staff, and children know that adults will listen to their concerns if they have a problem. Procedures to eradicate bad behaviour and to reward good work are effective. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities and those with behavioural difficulties are identified early and supported well, so that they are able to understand and attain their own targets and achieve well. The assessment, tracking and monitoring of childrens attainment are exceptionally good and contribute to the recent improvement in childrens progress in Years 3 to 6. Additional group work helps those who have not made as much progress as they should. The recent development of more effective targets for children in writing and mathematics is beginning to help them to know how to improve.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

The leadership and management is outstanding overall, and this is reflected in the childrens improving standards, exceptional personal development and effective teaching. In particular, it is evident in the way the school recognises areas for improvement and addresses them. This level of effectiveness is, in part at least, the result of the schools involvement in a scheme which has provided very good opportunities for staff training in leadership skills. The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide the school with outstanding leadership and make a very effective team. They are firmly focused on raising standards and helping children achieve as well as they can and consequently, the schools capacity to improve is outstanding. Weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection are now significant strengths. The parents and children have many opportunities to comment on the work of the school and ways it can be improved. The school council, in particular, works closely with the governing body and this means childrens voices are heard and influence the way adults plan for them. The parents and pupils views about the school are very positive. The work of subject leaders is very well developed. They complete very detailed evaluations of how effective the provision in their subject is and they spend significant time discussing and analysing this with linked governors before using the information in creating an appropriate improvement plan. The use of assessment information is outstanding and has improved since the last inspection. Performance analysis is used to highlight underachievement and good progress, and to identify children needing extra support. The governing body is exceptionally effective in supporting and challenging the school. They work very efficiently and very closely with the school staff to ensure that the momentum of improvement is maintained.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**



## Inspection judgements

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

### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1	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	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	NA

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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. We particularly enjoyed talking with you, especially those of you who are on the school council and are house captains. You told us a lot about the things you like doing at school. This letter is to tell you about some of the important things we saw during our visit. Your parents are very happy with your school, and you told us you are very happy there as well. Ideas from the school council are helping make the school a better place. We particularly like the way the Governors are working with you and supporting you. You told us that you like the way teachers give you work that is interesting and exciting to do, and help you if you find it difficult. You are lucky at your school because Mrs Eden, the teachers and other adults all look after and care for you very well. They encourage you to be healthy and to stay safe, and are working very hard to ensure that you learn new things and to make the school even better in the future. You behave very well in lessons, listen attentively and learn a lot. Your parents are also impressed at how well you help each other. This means the work of the playground buddies and of the older children who help the new Reception ones settle into school. The school helps you get good test results and this helps prepare you well for secondary school. Your teachers are keen to make the school even better for you and we think they are very good at knowing how they can do this. Teachers are rightly trying to improve writing standards among boys in particular. We also like the way they share targets with you and think they should carry on doing this in the future. You are very lucky to be at such an excellent, friendly school. Keep working hard and enjoy your time at Our Lady School!