



Our Lady's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123215
Local Authority Oxfordshire
Inspection number 281431
Inspection dates 13–14 November 2006
Reporting inspector Steven Hill

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Oxford Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Cowley
Age range of pupils	4–11		Oxford OX4 2LF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01865 779176
Number on roll (school)	312	Fax number	01865 775425
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Chris Bevan
		Headteacher	Mrs Hilary Webb
Date of previous school inspection	3 July 2000		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4–11	13–14 November 2006	281431

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a medium sized primary school. Almost two thirds of pupils are of White British heritage, and a tenth of Irish origin, with the rest coming from a wide range of other ethnic backgrounds. An increasing proportion of pupils have a mother tongue other than English, but only a few pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average, as are the socio-economic circumstances of pupils. Attainment on entry to the Reception class varies, but is below average overall, particularly in pupils' language skills. Since the last inspection, the school has changed from being a first school to a primary school, and has added pupils in Years 5 and 6 to the roll. This involved some extensive building work, and there were considerable changes to teaching staff over several years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that is led and managed well. The governors, who have a good understanding of the school, rightly told the inspectors that a major strength is the care of children as individuals, because they are respected, listened to and loved.

Achievement is now good overall and rising. Standards are average. Provision is good in the Foundation Stage. Achievement in the younger classes has been good for some time. Children start in the Reception class with standards that are below average overall, and consistently reach standards above average by the end of Year 2.

Standards at the end of Year 6 are average. Standards in national assessments in 2006 were above average in English, but below in science, where too few pupils reached the higher levels. The reason for the apparent decline in progress in older classes is that many of this group had their teaching disrupted by changes of staffing when they were in Years 3 and 4, resulting in inadequate progress. The school's good tracking records show plainly that these pupils made up most of the lost ground during Years 5 and 6, when they made very good progress in English and mathematics. All pupils are now making good progress in lessons, because staffing is stable and teaching is more consistent. Progress in science is just satisfactory, because of too few opportunities for pupils to plan and carry out their own investigations.

The good care, support and guidance provided for pupils strongly support their pastoral and academic development. Their individual progress is tracked carefully, and help is provided if they start to fall behind. Teachers are starting to set targets for pupils to guide them in their learning, but this is inconsistent. Pupils' personal development is good, and has improved significantly since the last inspection. Behaviour is good and pupils get on well with each other and with staff. Pupils work hard and have positive attitudes to school. They make good progress in lessons because of good teaching.

Teachers manage lessons well, so the pace of learning is good. They work hard to provide challenging and interesting work, often matched to the specific needs of different groups of pupils. This is a particular strength in English and mathematics. In science lessons, however, pupils too often all have the same work and too rarely have opportunities to plan and carry out investigations. Pupils say they find lessons fun. Good use is made of the skilled teaching assistants to help pupils make progress, particularly those who have learning difficulties or disabilities.

The headteacher gives clear direction to an effective team of staff. Together, they have worked successfully to improve pupils' personal development and to raise achievement since the last inspection. They have a realistic and accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Coordinators have good systems to monitor provision in their subjects, particularly in English, mathematics and science. In other subjects, they are providing effective help to colleagues, but lack systematic procedures to give them a clear overview of standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in science by providing more opportunities for investigative work, and higher levels of challenge for brighter pupils.
- Make the setting of individual targets more consistent, so that pupils are clearer about how they can improve their standards.
- Establish systems to give all subject leaders a clearer view of standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and has improved at Key Stage 2 in the last two years. Children enter school with overall skills below the expected level for their age, especially in speaking and listening and hand control. They achieve well in the Foundation Stage, but many still do not attain the levels expected nationally by the time they go into Year 1.

Their good progress continues and pupils reach standards that are above average by the end of Year 2, in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average in English, average in mathematics and below average in science. The schools' tracking information, as well as inspection evidence, shows that problems in the past of weak progress in Years 3 and 4 have been overcome. Progress is now good throughout the school, for all pupils, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good, with some significant strengths. Pupils behave well in lessons and sometimes their behaviour is outstanding, including for the youngest children, who settle quickly into school life.

Pupils share ideas and equipment willingly, collaborate well in their work, and use resources carefully. They have positive attitudes to their lessons and to each other. There is a climate of respect within the school and pupils gain confidence in their abilities as they are rewarded for their achievements. They are very well aware of what to do to maintain a healthy lifestyle, joining in opportunities for exercise enthusiastically, and they know how to keep themselves safe. They enjoy their lessons and their attendance is good. They are conscientious when taking responsibility within school. For example, under supervision they take turns to answer the telephone at lunchtime and take messages. Their skills in literacy and numeracy are developing effectively and they are well-prepared for the future. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, although some pupils lack confidence when talking about a diverse range of cultures and traditions.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers build on positive relationships and well-established expectations to ensure that lessons are orderly, and pupils behave well and work hard. Pupils respond positively to teachers' lively presentations of work, contributing enthusiastically to lessons and taking a pride in their achievements. Effective help from teaching assistants contributes to pupils' good progress, particularly those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Pupils who are new to learning English also get good support and do well.

Teachers generally match work well to pupils' needs, although this is not consistent across subjects. Teachers make good use of collaborative work to develop pupils' understanding, which supports their speaking and listening skills in particular. Marking is good, showing pupils how well they have done and, in the best examples, how they can progress further. Teachers are starting to use individual targets for pupils. However, targets are often too general, and many pupils are vague about what their targets are, or how they work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, supporting pupils' good progress. The Foundation Stage provides an effective blend of practical, group and individual work. Throughout the school, there is a good emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. A focus on improving pupils' speaking and listening skills last year, as a basis for their other work, was very successful in raising standards in writing. However, pupils have too few opportunities to plan and carry out investigations in science. The school is starting to make good links between different subjects, to enable pupils to improve and apply the skills they have learned in different contexts.

Effective personal, social and health education ensures that pupils know how to stay safe and healthy. Learning is made interesting through a varied programme of visits, visitors and live theatre, music and art opportunities. Pupils benefit from the school's themed weeks. They said that they enjoyed making games and biscuits in mathematics week because, 'You get to do your choice and we hardly ever get that'. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school is a caring community and pupils' personal development is promoted well. Parents appreciate this. One wrote that the school's support for pupils 'sets them up for life' and another said, 'The strong Christian

and Catholic ethos is present in a very loving way'. Good arrangements when children first start school help them to settle quickly.

Procedures for tracking pupils' progress are effective and information is used well to plan extra support for those who need it. Staff check pupils' progress in lessons and adapt the teaching to meet individual needs. Some pupils have targets set for what they are to learn next in literacy and numeracy, but as yet this is not consistent across the school. Procedures for keeping pupils safe and protected are secure, and pupils are confident that bullying is very rare and that any incident is dealt with effectively. Pupils' views are sought and acted upon, through the school council. They are happy to approach staff in school if they have a problem they find hard to resolve. There are good links with outside agencies to support all groups of pupils including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, and those learning English as an additional language. Healthy lifestyles are encouraged very effectively so pupils enjoy their morning fruit, and they confirm that they get lots of exercise.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management have enabled the school to build on the strengths from the last inspection, in particular to raise achievement in the older classes and to significantly improve pupils' personal development. The school is well placed to improve further. Monitoring of teaching has enabled senior staff to provide helpful advice to colleagues and so improve teaching. A more thorough tracking of pupils' progress, both collectively and individually, has been a significant improvement. Individuals who start to fall behind are now identified quickly, and the school takes effective action to help them. Similarly, school-wide issues can be tackled. The relatively weak achievement of high-fliers in science had already been identified by the school, and a plan is being drawn up to address the issue.

Staff work together effectively as a team. The concentration on raising standards in English last year was very effective, particularly in improving results in speaking, listening and writing.

Coordinators have a clear view of provision in their subjects and ensure that the full curriculum is taught systematically. They give good advice and support to colleagues, helping them to improve their practice. With the exception of English, mathematics and science, the school does not have consistent systems to monitor the standards pupils achieve in each subject.

The governors have an effective committee system to help them fulfil their responsibilities, which they do well. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for your friendly welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and watching you in lessons. You told us that you think that Our Lady's is a good school, and we agree. It is good and is getting even better.

All the adults in the school look after you well, and do their best to make sure everyone is safe and happy. You told us that, if there are problems, then the adults sort them out quickly. They keep a careful eye on how everyone is getting on, so they can give you extra help if you need it. They are particularly good at this in English, mathematics and science. We have asked them to find ways of seeing just how well you are doing in other subjects as well.

Your behaviour is good and you get on well with each other. You told us that you enjoy your lessons, especially the special weeks where you do lots of different, interesting things. You know a lot about staying healthy, and have lots of chances for exercise.

You are making good progress, especially in English and mathematics, because your teachers are good at helping you to learn. They try hard to make lessons interesting and fun, and you work hard so you get on well. You are not doing quite so well in science, because sometimes the work is too easy and you don't have enough chances to do practical work and plan investigations. We agree with your teachers that this needs to improve, and they are already making plans for it. We asked you about your targets for learning, and some of you seemed a bit confused over what these were, so we have asked the teachers to plan how they can improve this, so that you can learn even more.

The headteacher, staff and governors are good at making sure that everything runs smoothly and are always trying to make things even better. You can all help by carrying on working hard, enjoying school, and making sure you understand your targets.

Best wishes,

Steven Hill

Lead inspector