

Our Lady of Lourdes RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105245
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	287170
Inspection dates	3–4 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Jean Kendall HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	187
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bernard Carney
Headteacher	Mrs Chadwick
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2003
School address	Beech Avenue Farnworth Bolton Lancashire BL4 0BP
Telephone number	01204 333181
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic School is a slightly smaller than average sized primary school serving the parish of Farnworth, close to Bolton. It is in an area of relatively high social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is slightly below average. The majority of pupils are of White British origin, although pupils from a range of different ethnic backgrounds are represented. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language has recently increased and is slightly above average.

The school has been through some significant changes since the last inspection. Following a period of some turbulence in staffing there has been an almost complete change in the teachers and a change of headteacher. The present headteacher was appointed in April 2005 and a deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2005. There is now a stable staff team. The school is popular with parents and the number of pupils on roll has increased significantly. Forty one pupils have joined the school during this academic year in addition to the usual intake into the Reception class.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Our Lady of Lourdes is a rapidly improving school which provides a good education for its pupils and gives good value for money. It is a highly inclusive school which celebrates diversity and promotes equality of opportunity well. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and for those who speak English as an additional language is good. Its success is underpinned by a strong sense of teamwork with all teaching and support staff, leaders and governors working toward a common goal to 'protect and nurture' its pupils. Within this strong school community, staff and pupils feel highly valued and are supportive of each other. Pupils make good progress in their personal development and grow in confidence.

Teachers work hard to promote the enjoyment of learning and pupils are happy at school and proud of their achievements. Pupils' behaviour is excellent both in lessons and around the school. They are keen to learn, polite and considerate. Good quality teaching, which is well matched to pupils' interests and learning needs, is raising achievement. Pupils are making at least satisfactory and often good progress in lessons, although this is not yet reflected in pupils' performance in the national tests. Overall attainment at Year 2, at the end of Key Stage 1, has been negatively influenced by the recent influx of pupils and is below average. Attainment in the 2006 end of Key Stage 2 national tests was in line with national expectations overall, although attainment in mathematics was below average. The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is good and children make consistently good progress.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher and the deputy have shown very impressive leadership to promote and maintain good quality provision through a period of staffing instability. Less experienced staff are now developing leadership skills. The school's self-evaluation is of good quality and accurately identifies relative strengths and areas for development. Subject leaders are well informed although some action plans are not sufficiently focused on the most important actions needed to raise standards. Governors have provided good support and challenge to leaders and have overseen the school through a period of rapid improvement. Parents are highly supportive and many commented on how they have seen the school go from 'strength to strength'. The highly committed staff and able leadership have successfully tackled aspects of provision that were previously inadequate and have good capacity to bring about further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, especially in mathematics.
- Focus subject action plans more precisely on key improvement areas.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Children arrive at the school from a range of pre-school settings. They have varying levels of skill, some of which are below those expected for their age, especially in language and literacy. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and are well prepared to begin the National Curriculum when they move into Year 1.

Due to improved teaching in Key Stage 1, pupils are making at least satisfactory and often good progress in their lessons. However, this is not yet reflected in National Curriculum tests taken at the end of the key stage and standards were below the national average in 2006.

School data indicates that attainment has remained below average in the 2007 assessments and this is partly due to significant changes to the cohort. Half of the 30 pupils in the current Year 2 class joined the school late in Year 1 or during Year 2 and nine of these pupils have learning difficulties. All pupils have made at least satisfactory progress due to good induction procedures and teaching that is well matched to their learning needs.

Standards at Key Stage 2 are in line with the national average overall but are variable between subjects. Standards in science and English have improved and pupils are making good progress in these subjects. Weaknesses in past provision have left gaps in pupils' knowledge in mathematics and this is reflected in the well below average performance in mathematics tests in 2006. Good assessment procedures and teaching which is addressing the gaps in understanding are beginning to raise standards in mathematics. Pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities make at least satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are proud of their school which they enjoy very much. Pupils cite friendships with peers, 'very helpful and understanding adults', and the way teachers make learning enjoyable as the major reasons for their sense of pride and enjoyment. Pupils are keen to learn and attentive in lessons. Their behaviour, in lessons and outside, is exemplary. Pupils confirm that incidents related to bullying or racism are very rare and dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They quickly grow in confidence, are polite towards adults and each other, and work well in pairs and groups. Parents greatly value the school's work in creating 'thriving and happy young people'. Attendance is steadily improving and is now close to the national average.

The school's work to become a 'Healthy School' has benefited pupils. For example, the school council gives pupils good experience of working together for the benefit of the school community and pupils understand well the importance of fitness and how to keep safe and healthy. Good social standards, combined with improving basic and computer skills, prepare pupils well for the next stage in their education and future well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Important strengths in teaching are found in many lessons, including good quality planning and the way learning objectives are shared with pupils. Thoughtful consideration is given to pupils' different learning styles and good use is made of interesting activities to make learning fun. The tasks set for pupils are at the right level. Teaching assistants are used well to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or those for whom English is not their first language. Marking is well used to support pupils' learning. There are high expectations of learners' behaviour and close attention is given to developing pupils' social skills, confidence and self-esteem. This contributes significantly to pupils' good personal development and learning takes place in a positive, supportive atmosphere.

There are some areas for improvement to raise pupils' learning in a minority of lessons. The end of lessons are not always used well to summarise, assess or extend learning. In a few lessons, there is not always enough clear explanation to support the key learning points.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good overall. The Foundation Stage provides pupils with a good start to their learning.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, with an important emphasis on practical and creative activities, which enhance the access and enjoyment of all pupils. A government programme aimed at improving the social and emotional aspects of learning makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. The use of topic work on matters as diverse as 'Flight', 'The Environment' and 'Ourselves' effectively creates more links and relevance between subjects. The growing practice of teachers teaching to their specialist subjects across the school is giving pupils a richer experience. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is not their first language is good. The learning environment is rich in terms of adult support and learning resources.

The range and participation levels in out-of-school activities, covering sport, music and drama, are good. There is a good range of visits and visitors, which plays an important part in opening pupils' eyes to the wider world.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of pastoral care provided for pupils is very good. Parents and pupils find staff highly approachable and understanding. The views of parents and pupils are sought, valued and taken into account. Pupils experiencing personal difficulties are very well supported, by both adults and their peers. Child protection requirements and health and safety procedures are well established and secure. Pupils understandably feel safe and very well cared for. The school fully lives up to the opening line in its mission statement to 'protect and nurture' its pupils.

Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. The school has good arrangements to support, both personally and academically, the growing proportion of pupils who join school at other than the usual time. Staff routinely set and review targets for all pupils in English, mathematics and science. Pupils know their targets and are keen to reach them. Adults use praise well when pupils show positive attitudes, politeness and consideration.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has provided very impressive leadership to promote and maintain good quality provision through a period of staffing instability. She has a clear vision for the school and has created an ethos where staff and pupils have high expectations and work together effectively. The senior leadership team has been enhanced by the appointment of an able deputy headteacher and it is developing key areas of the school successfully. With the support staff the school has rigorously tackled previously inadequate aspects of provision. As a result of good self-evaluation and effective action, the quality of

teaching and learning has improved and pupils' achievements are rising. Performance management is effectively organised, being linked to clear priorities for the school as a whole and the professional development needs of individuals.

The relative lack of leadership experience on the staff is being managed well through the creation of leadership teams. The skills of less experienced staff are being developed to enable them to play a fuller part in leadership and management of subjects and aspects across the school. Core subject leaders are well informed of strengths and weaknesses in provision but some subject action plans are not sufficiently focused on key improvement areas.

Governors provide good support and challenge to the school. They have a high level of commitment and have overseen the school through significant change and rapid improvement. They have a range of expertise, play an active role in monitoring performance and have played a very full part in the school's improvement. Excellent financial management has enabled the school to improve resources and brought about a transformation in the learning environment.

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Annex A

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

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	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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.

Annex A**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	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Primary School, Farnworth, BL4 0BP

Thank you very much for welcoming us into Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary. We enjoyed talking with you about your work and life in school. We think your school is a good school and you are right to be proud of your achievements. We were particularly impressed by the way you work together with all the staff to make your school such a friendly and happy place. We think all your teachers provide very good care and support to help you develop and grow in confidence. Your behaviour was excellent when we were in school and we like the way you help and support each other.

You told us that you enjoy learning. We could see that you are keen to learn and you work very hard. Mrs Chadwick and your teachers also work very hard to make lessons fun and interesting for you. They want you to achieve the best you possibly can. We were very pleased to see how well you are doing in your lessons. We think that you can do even better and have asked your teachers to help you achieve even higher standards in your work and particularly in mathematics.

Please thank your parents for sending back the questionnaires. They told us that they are very pleased with the school and think Mrs Chadwick and all the staff are doing a good job. They said that they have seen the school go from 'strength to strength'.

We hope you all go from strength to strength as well and wish you all the very best for the future.