

Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115148
Local Authority	SOUTHEND-ON-SEA
Inspection number	290146
Inspection date	18 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Sandra Tweddell

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	418
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Vicent Copeland
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Sullivan
Date of previous school inspection	3 July 2002
School address	Manchester Drive Leigh-on-sea Essex SS9 3HS
Telephone number	01702475689
Fax number	01702716481

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This large school takes pupils from a wide range of backgrounds. The vast majority of pupils are of Catholic faith and are from White British backgrounds, a few are from minority ethnic groups. The percentages of pupils entitled to free school meals, with learning difficulties or disabilities and for whom English is their second language are lower than most schools. Attainment on entry is broadly in line with that expected for children at this age. Awards include the Basic Skills Quality Mark and Active Mark. A new headteacher was appointed just over a year ago.

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 good school with many outstanding features. This is due to the excellent vision and drive of the headteacher and the very strong team-work of all staff. Many parents speak highly of how the school develops well-rounded individuals. The school self-evaluation is very good and used well to improve the school. Value for money is good.

Achievement across the school is good and standards are above average and in writing are well above average. The provision in the Reception classes is excellent so children make outstanding progress in personal development, literacy and knowledge and understanding of the world. Results in national tests have been consistently above average and in 2006, were well above average. In order to move from a good to an outstanding school, the headteacher has correctly identified areas for action, such as developing children's thinking skills. This year, teachers have worked successfully to raise the standard of more able writers.

The personal development of pupils is excellent. All who work in the school, whether adult or child, are valued. Pupils are cared for very well. Parents appreciate the very caring ethos of the school and children say they feel safe and enjoy learning. Pupils enjoy their many responsibilities. Teaching and learning are good with outstanding features and the learning environment is exciting. Assessment practices have been tightened although there is still some inconsistency, including its use for academic guidance. The excellent and rich curriculum promotes a very good awareness of a healthy lifestyle and the school is rightly proud of its many sports trophies.

Leadership and management are good. The new leadership team has worked effectively to develop skills to monitor the school's work. The role of subject leaders is now a priority to ensure that standards are equally high across the curriculum. Governance is good, governors know the school well and bring a wide range of expertise. They have identified that their strategic role needs strengthening. One parent wrote, 'We are very lucky to have such a fabulous, caring headteacher and teaching staff.' The very strong team work and progress since the last inspection gives the school very good capacity to reach its aim of excellence.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that assessment systems are used consistently.
- Extend the expertise of subject leaders in monitoring and evaluation.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good. Children enter the school with standards that are close to those expected for their age. They are prepared very well to enter Year 1 and when they leave the Reception classes many are working within the early stages of the national curriculum. By the time they leave Year 2 they are about nine months ahead of their age group in reading, writing and mathematics. Between Years 3 and 6 they make satisfactory progress and maintain the high standards. More pupils achieve higher levels in the tests than in other schools as all pupils are challenged to make the most of their abilities. This year, teachers have successfully focused on raising further the standards of pupils' work and standards in writing are well above average. The achievement of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is excellent because their needs are quickly picked up and teaching takes very good account of their specific difficulties. There are differences in the achievement of boys and girls but the differences are

similar to the national picture. Boys' achievement has been a target for improvement and the success can be seen in the improvements in their writing. Pupils from minority ethnic groups or for whom English is an additional language make similar progress to their peers. Standards of singing are high in Year 2 and paintings in Year 6 are of a very high quality. The school sets challenging targets which it meets successfully.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

This area is excellent. The ethos of the Catholic Church permeates the school and gives a very strong spiritual dimension. Pupils enjoy being at school listing 'one big family', 'lessons' and 'friends' as reasons. Attendance is well above average and any absences are due to unavoidable illnesses. Behaviour is very good and pupils respect themselves and others. Relationships amongst adults and pupils are excellent as all feel highly valued. Pupils have a very good understanding of the richness and diversity of cultures which starts with those cultures represented in their school. The School Council took full responsibility for setting up a Fair Trade cafe which helped them and others to learn skills that will be valuable when they leave school. Responsibilities are spread throughout all classes and pupils take these seriously. In the playground young children enjoy skipping, organised by Year 5 pupils. Pupils also contribute extremely well to the community through a number of charities, such as CAFOD. An assembly, led by Year 2 pupils who gave a confident production of their work, demonstrated the excellent personal development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and some of the teaching is outstanding. The excellent learning environment motivates pupils to want to learn. Teaching takes good account of the range of abilities in the school. Gifted and talented pupils are identified and taught appropriately. They also have sessions where they are challenged to achieve highly, such as during art week when they used their drawings of the school oak tree to produce illuminated scripts. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are taught very well under the excellent guidance of the team responsible for meeting their needs. Strengths in teaching include effective questions and careful planning. The planning has been used very well to maintain the high standards in the Reception classes where there have been recent staff changes. The learning intentions of lessons are not always consistently identified. Pupils are told about the activity they are going to do, but not always told what they need to learn. The use of assessment to improve learning is a focus for the school's work. Currently there is inconsistency in its use, for example, marking does not always suggest the next step to achieve the target that is set and in some books, targets have not been visited for some time.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding and gives pupils rich and varied experiences. An excellent range of extra-curricular and other activities make it exciting. There is a very strong focus on drama, music and art. An art week brought in artists to work with pupils. Year 1 and 2 classes were entranced by a wood carver and later were engrossed in drawing some of his carvings. Sport

has a high profile and the school has won many awards. French is taught across the school and pupils in Years 3 to 6 can attend an after school club to learn Spanish. The curriculum caters very well for the needs of all pupils in the school. In keeping with the Catholic ethos, personal, social and health education runs throughout the curriculum as well as being taught separately. This contributes excellently to pupils' well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Personal guidance is excellent and academic guidance good. Many parents commented on the caring and safe environment that fosters excellent academic and personal development. Procedures for safeguarding children meet all requirements and are regularly reviewed. Health and safety matters are dealt with efficiently. The school fosters pupils' self esteem very well, particularly for those with emotional difficulties who are supported by a school counsellor and special sessions where they are taught how to relax as part of managing their behaviour. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is excellent and a number of parents wrote of their appreciation for the support their children are given. One parent commented that 'teachers go the extra mile' to ensure that all children are supported. Pupils are given targets for their work and also suggestions as to how to reach them. This is still inconsistent across the school and some, but not all, pupils do not understand their targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

This is good and the leadership of the headteacher is excellent. The school has set itself the aim of becoming outstanding. School self-evaluation has involved all staff and is a rigorous analysis of what is working well and how the school can move towards its aim of excellence. Much of what needs to be done is refinement of existing systems and this has already successfully taken standards to a higher level. The new leadership team has used professional development to gain skills in monitoring and evaluation and is starting to use these new skills well. Appropriately, the role of subject leaders is the next focus to ensure they are confident with their subject matter and how to monitor the quality of provision. Governors bring a range of expertise to their role and they hold the school to account very well. They are appropriately planning to develop their strategic role by becoming more involved in the early stages of the school self-evaluation. The issues from the last inspection have been tackled well. The strongly collegiate staff and the excellent leadership of the headteacher give the school very good capacity to meet its aim of becoming an outstanding school.

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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?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
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	2
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	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	1
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	1
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

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

19 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3HS

I am writing to let you know the findings of your inspection a few weeks ago. Thank you for making me so welcome and for answering my questions. A special thanks to the School Council for giving up their lunch hour to talk to me.

You go to a good school and some of the work done by Mrs Sullivan and your teachers is outstanding. Mrs Sullivan aims for excellence in all she does and you can see this in the high standards of work that you produce. Your parents are proud of your personal development and I agree with them that this is excellent. You told me that you enjoy lessons, feel safe and that the school is one big family. I could see that you learn to be proud of yourselves and to care for one another.

I was very impressed by the Year 2 assembly. The children who took part were very confident, putting on a play about their work for the whole school. The singing, dancing and reading were very good. I was impressed by the excellent behaviour of the rest of the school as they watched. Your excellent behaviour was also noticeable in lessons and around the school. One of the reasons why you enjoy your work is that you do many interesting things, such as the art week. Another reason is that teaching is good and many lessons are excellent.

I have asked your teachers and governors to do the following.

- Consistently set targets for your work and let you know how to reach them. You can make sure that you work to reach your targets.
- Teachers who have responsibility for a subject are sharpening their skills to make sure they know how high standards are. This work needs to continue.

Thank you once again for an enjoyable day in your school.

Yours sincerely

Sandra Tweddell

Lead Inspector