

# Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115290
<b>Local Authority</b>	ESSEX LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	311901
<b>Inspection date</b>	7 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Patricia Cox

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	219
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sister Sheila Sumner
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Adrian Hayes
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 September 2003
<b>School address</b>	New London Road Chelmsford Essex CM2 0RG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01245 353755
<b>Fax number</b>	01245 344292

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<b>Age group</b>	4-11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector in one day. The inspector focused on whether pupils, especially the most able, make good progress at Key Stages 1 and 2, particularly in mathematics; how well pupils develop their understanding of their own and other cultures through an exciting and well-balanced global curriculum; how well assessment is used to track pupils' progress and plan work for them; and how far pupils are involved in setting these targets and measuring their own progress.

Evidence was gathered from classroom visits, discussions with staff and pupils and examination of school documents, especially assessment data. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

Almost all of the pupils in this average sized school share the Catholic faith. Few have a first language other than English or are entitled to free school meals. The proportion identified as needing support with their work is below the national average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, and the proportion from other ethnic groups is similar to the national average. About 30 languages are represented among these ethnic groups, although few pupils are at an early stage in learning English. Attainment on entry to the school is similar to national expectations. The school has gained the Royal Bank of Scotland's 'Supergrounds' and the ActiveMark awards.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This good school is highly valued by its pupils, who thoroughly enjoy their time here. Parents have a great regard for the caring, spiritual ethos and the inclusive environment. The many strengths are the result of effective leadership and management; the headteacher and staff work well as a team, focused on raising standards in a supportive and positive atmosphere. Subject coordinators and class teachers are held to account for standards in their subjects and classes. The school knows itself well, through its efficient system for tracking pupils' progress and critical examination of teaching and learning. Planning for improvement is good, and organised well. Appropriate areas for development are identified, closely linked to the results of the school's self-evaluation. Effective action is taken to tackle these issues, although the systems for evaluating the impact of actions are not as rigorous as they could be. The school works well with parents, although a minority feel that it does not communicate with them as well as it might. Governance is good; governors have a good range of expertise that they use for the benefit of the school. They are involved well in its life and work and take seriously their role in holding it to account, under the knowledgeable leadership of the chair of governors. The school gives good value for money and is well placed to improve further.

The school takes exceptionally good care of its pupils' physical and emotional needs and they feel safe and secure. They say that if they are upset or have problems, there is always a trusted adult they can turn to for support. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding; they have an extremely well developed sense of fairness. Spirituality is at the heart of everything the school does and this is reflected in the pupils' growing thoughtfulness about faith and values. The impact of the school's pastoral care is evident in their increasingly good behaviour. The younger children behave well, and, on the whole, the oldest pupils are extremely mature, confident and considerate. Attendance is well above the national average. By the time they leave, pupils are prepared well academically and personally for the next stage of their education and their future lives.

Relationships throughout the school, between pupils and with adults, are excellent and pupils of all ethnic groups get on very well together. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay healthy, although they say that they would like the drugs education programme to start earlier than it does. Their exceptional cultural development is fostered through the school's rich curriculum and extensive cultural links, particularly overseas. These include a partnership with a Chinese school, a French exchange programme and hosting Japanese students. These relationships also contribute to pupils' very good understanding of global issues and their outstanding contributions to the immediate and wider community. Older pupils act as peer mediators to help others to reflect on their behaviour and disagreements. Members of the school council, elected from the junior classes, take their roles extremely seriously in 'making the school better'. Links with the local Member of Parliament have helped them to understand how they can contribute further, for example through a visit to the Houses of Parliament. They think that some of the younger pupils would also do a good job on the council.

These excellent contributions to the good curriculum are threaded through planning that is developing in interesting and thoughtful ways. The six areas of learning of the Foundation Stage Curriculum are taken as the starting point for development through the school and links are being developed across subjects to make them more meaningful. The school is also exploring ways of extending and enriching the curriculum for the most able pupils, but this is at a relatively early stage. There is a good range of activities at lunchtime and after school.

The school sets challenging targets for attainment and these are almost always met and often exceeded because teaching and learning are good. After a sound start in the Reception class, pupils make good progress through the rest of the school. Standards have usually been above average at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 and sometimes exceptionally high. Pupils' achievement is generally strongest in English and science. It is satisfactory overall in mathematics, but girls do not do as well as boys. The school has already identified this shortcoming and is taking action to eradicate it. After a dip in 2007 at the end of both key stages, standards are again higher than expected, particularly in Year 6, where two thirds of pupils are on course to exceed the expected level. Those who find learning more difficult are supported well and also make good progress. There is no difference in the achievement of different ethnic groups and those whose first language is not English make good progress in acquiring fluency in the language. Pupils are involved well in understanding how well they are doing. They know their targets in English and mathematics, and have frequent opportunities to use the simple systems to show whether they have met the intentions of the lesson.

Teachers interest pupils in lessons through their own enthusiasm and energy. Planning is consistent and lessons are structured well. Teachers make it clear to pupils what they are to learn and refer back to these intentions during the lesson. The activities are well suited to the needs of the different groups in the class. The pace of lessons is often brisk and some interesting resources are used. The excellent outside facilities are being developed as a teaching resource through the new 'Supergrounds' programme. While pupils make good progress in developing their information and communication technology (ICT) skills, time is occasionally wasted in moving to the ICT suite when the skills could be developed equally well in the classroom. Teachers use questioning well to check pupils' understanding and promote thinking. They frequently encourage pupils to discuss and develop their ideas together. Pupils respond well; they concentrate for long periods even when they find the work challenging. The developing assessment systems are proving valuable tools in checking pupils' progress and identifying those who are falling behind. However, there is some variability in the way that teachers understand and manage these systems. Consequently, it is not always possible to have ready access to the information when required.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 3**

The children make a sound start to their school career in the Reception class. Staff take good care of them and there is a strong sense of fun in lessons. Activities are planned to provide a balance between children's independent choices and those that are led by adults. The children make satisfactory progress overall, although they do better in their mathematical development than in their language skills. There is some good teaching, which particularly helps children to develop their physical and creative skills well. There are instances, however, when all children do the same work when the more able could be stretched further. Songs are used well to support the learning that has taken place and children join in enthusiastically, with good concentration. The staff cope well with an awkward site that limits the immediate access to the outdoors, using other areas of the accommodation to compensate.

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

- Build on the work already started to raise standards in mathematics, particularly for the girls, so that progress matches that in English.

- Develop further ways of challenging and inspiring the most able pupils, throughout the school.
- Bring consistency to the way that teachers understand and apply information about pupils' progress.

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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	2

### 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	2
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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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**

8 February 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Our Lady Immaculate Catholic School, Chelmsford CM2 0RG

I enjoyed my visit yesterday very much and especially liked going into some classrooms, and meeting some of you and hearing about what your school is like. I thought you would like to know what I found out.

I agree with you that yours is a good school and that you make good progress there. It has a very happy atmosphere so it wasn't a big surprise to hear how much you like it. I was very pleased to hear that all your teachers are nice and they look after you well. Mr Hayes and the staff work hard to make the work interesting and to help you to find out about all those interesting places you have links with, like China. I enjoyed watching the Year 3 children doing their Chinese exercises, they tried so hard to keep in time. The younger children behave well and the older pupils are extremely good. The Year 6 children were very helpful and sensible and it was good to hear that the Year 2 children I had lunch with knew their targets.

There are three things that the school could do to make it even better. You don't do as well in maths as you do in English, especially the girls. The teachers should look at ways of helping you to get on faster, but the girls could help by trying a little harder. There are some of you who find learning quite easy and I'd like the school to give you some really interesting projects so that you do even better. The teachers have a good way of measuring how well you are making progress but some of them are better at it than others. So I would like them to make sure that they can all do it well.

Thank you once again for your time and the help you gave me.

My best wishes for the future; I'm sure you'll all do really well.

Pat Cox

Lead inspector