

The Rosary Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115708
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	312039
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Mary Harlow 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	181
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andy Rozwadowski
Headteacher	Rosy Savory
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 2004
School address	Beeches Green Stroud GL5 4AB
Telephone number	01453 762774
Fax number	01453 762774

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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

The Rosary Catholic Primary School is smaller than the average primary school. It is situated near the centre of Stroud and serves the parishes of Stroud and Stonehouse. The pupils come from an extensive area surrounding the district of Stroud and from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. Most pupils are of White British heritage and very few are learning English as an additional language.

Attainment on entry to the Reception Year is broadly at the expected levels for four-year-olds although a few children start with higher levels than expected in mathematical development. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. The majority of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties or behavioural problems.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'The Rosary School is friendly and welcoming; the older children are caring towards the younger ones making the school feel like a family.' 'The ethos in the school is one of its exceptional qualities.'

These are the views of many parents and they are right! The Rosary Catholic Primary School is indeed a good school; it is a happy and harmonious community where over time pupils thrive due to good levels of teaching and care. All at the school are working extremely hard to do the best for the pupils; as a result, their personal development and well-being are good. The school works exceptionally well with the parishes it serves and these strong relationships are contributing significantly to the special ethos in the school and to the pupils' spiritual development, which is excellent.

Achievement across the school is good overall. The children get off to a flying start in Reception, where all make good progress because of skilled teaching and careful guidance. This good progress continues and by the time the pupils leave they attain well above average standards in all subjects, although achievement in mathematics is lower than in English and science. The school is working hard and with some success to improve the teaching of mathematics to ensure it is of a consistently high quality across the school. That said, not enough challenge is provided in some classes for the more able pupils, particularly in problem solving activities. Good strategies are in place to improve the standards achieved by boys in writing and these are beginning to have a positive effect, but they are still not achieving as well as girls and the gap is most marked in Key Stage 1. Quite understandably, due to unforeseen staff absences during the past two years, a significant number of parents reported concerns about the progress made by children in particular year groups. The school has done everything possible to address this difficult situation and is monitoring the pupils' progress assiduously. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties and behavioural problems achieve well because of the skilled attention they receive. The curriculum is good and there is a good range of visits and clubs on offer, which the pupils appreciate.

Following a challenging period of instability, quiet but determined leadership by the new headteacher is ensuring that the school is now moving forward in the right direction. The school knows itself well and sets the right targets to make it even better. There is no room for complacency, and improvements, including the issues identified in the last inspection, are being tackled robustly. The staffing arrangements planned for the next academic year are sensible. All at the school are committed to improving an identified weakness in communication with parents, to ensure that they all feel fully informed about the life of the school.

The governing body is impressive. It continues to work tirelessly with the neighbouring residents and institutions to improve access to the school site. The narrow lane providing vehicular access is monitored vigilantly at the start and the end of the day to ensure the children are safe. Governors are meticulous in their checks of the premises and the fencing surrounding the playground has recently been repaired. The school has good capacity for continued improvement and its future looks bright.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good planning and teaching mean that children in the Reception class achieve well, and standards are in line with those expected by the end of the year. A choice of interesting themes coupled with good teaching of letters and sounds ensures that the children are engaged and motivated in their learning. This was typified by the work observed on caterpillars, where the children produced accurate mathematical recordings as they hunted for treasure both inside and outside the classroom. All exhibited commendable levels of concentration; several could use rich vocabulary, as exemplified by a child who when asked what he was doing said with some indignation, 'You just have to find the treasure basically!' The children have a well developed sense of how to keep safe and to protect themselves from the sun. When moving outside several chanted the class mantra enthusiastically: 'Stay in the shade not in the sun'. Those who did not have protection were designing and making imaginative hats out of paper, which they wore with pride. The outdoor area is adequately resourced and used effectively to promote children's confidence, independence and physical development. Leadership is purposeful and the regular teaching assistants are of a high quality.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the teaching of mathematics to ensure it is of a consistently high quality across the school to secure continued improved achievement, particularly for the more able pupils.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies in place to raise boys' achievement, particularly in writing.
- Improve the quality of communication with parents to enable all of them to feel fully informed and involved in the life of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards in English, mathematics and science are significantly above national averages at both key stages and have been for several years, apart from a temporary dip in 2006. The pupils make good progress overall, including pupils with learning difficulties and those with behavioural problems. Capable teaching assistants sensitively support these groups of pupils. The school has put in place effective measures to ensure continued improvement in standards, particularly in mathematics at the higher levels, by improving aspects of teaching. Appropriate and challenging targets are set for pupils and the school's systems for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress are rigorous. Boys' underperformance, particularly in writing, has been under meticulous scrutiny this year and good strategies are in place to capture their enthusiasm for English; these are resulting in improved standards across the school. In the English lessons observed, the boys were motivated and enthusiastic in their learning because of thoughtful planning and lively teaching. Nonetheless, there is still more to do, especially in Key Stage 1, where the attainment gap is more marked in reading and writing, to ensure the boys achieve as well as the girls.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The strong commitment exhibited by all the adults to the development of the whole child results in pupils believing that they can achieve. The warm, personal welcome afforded to the

pupils at the start of the day, as several parents aptly reported, 'makes mornings a delight'. This is a fitting testament to the way that each child is special and valued by all in the school. Without exception, those children spoken to enjoy school and feel their ideas are valued. All are delightful and refreshingly open in conversation, showing a highly developed sense of respect and care for others. This is particularly noticeable in the manner in which they listen to each other in discussion and play together at break and lunchtime.

Because the school places a high importance on developing the pupils' self-esteem within a climate where Christian values are nourished exceptionally well, their spiritual development is excellent. Social, moral and cultural development is good and they benefit from a wealth of opportunities designed to cultivate these aspects, for example the poignant assembly on 'any act of kindness is never wasted', where the pupils' singing was joyous. The sterling work of the school council to improve healthy eating is contributing significantly to the pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyles. That said, they would welcome and benefit from increased opportunities for a variety of structured play at lunchtimes. Attendance is consistently good, as is punctuality.

Behaviour is good and often exemplary. Around the school, pupils say 'hello' or 'good morning' to visitors and adults and invariably greet them with warm, friendly smiles. They feel very safe in school and know there is an adult to turn to if in need. When asked about bullying a pupil said, 'There is still some but we know what to do if it happens and it is sorted out quickly.' Pupils are developing good basic skills that prepare them for the next school and later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Excellent relationships between staff and pupils help them to develop good attitudes to learning. In most lessons observed, pupils listened attentively, cooperated well in pairs and groups and worked hard, displaying commendable levels of motivation due to lively, interesting teaching. That said, the more able pupils are not challenged sufficiently in every class, particularly in problem solving activities in mathematics and science. The new national frameworks for literacy and numeracy, together with 'Assessment for Learning', are bringing about improvements to teaching and contributing significantly to the pupils' good progress. The quality of lesson planning and assessment is good.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The recent improvements in curricular planning ensure that the pupils receive an interesting curriculum with good opportunities for both practical and creative work. An increased emphasis on the use of interactive whiteboards is capturing the pupils' imagination and motivation. The curriculum is enriched by exciting themed weeks, such as 'Healthy Eating', and there are appropriate trips and visits by outside groups, which whet the pupils' appetite for learning. Although there are some good displays of pupils' work, most notably in English, mathematics and religious education, the standard of display and celebration of the pupils' work is not high enough to ensure all classes are vibrant, stimulating learning environments. There is a good range of clubs in which a large number of pupils participate enthusiastically. Sensible plans are in place to increase the opportunities for outdoor learning and to introduce a modern foreign language.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides an extremely secure and caring environment for all its pupils. Appropriate procedures to ensure the pupils' safety, welfare and protection are in place alongside the statutory required safeguarding measures. The pupils adhere sensibly to the strict, safety routines at the start and the end of the day. Most pupils are clear about their targets for improvement and academic monitoring is strong. The quality of marking is a little inconsistent across the school and does not always give clear guidance to pupils on how they can improve. Arrangements to prepare pupils for transfer to secondary school are effective and result in a smooth transition at the end of Year 6.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Under the headteacher's sensitive direction, ably supported by capable senior managers, staff are growing in confidence to develop their leadership roles and there is a spirit of optimism permeating the school. All are focused sharply on raising standards and there is a real will to bring about the necessary improvements. The senior team and the governors have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are refreshingly honest in their self-evaluation. Aspects for improvement are being tackled assiduously and monitored carefully.

The school's systems for checking on its progress are robust and the school development plan is an excellent tool to move the school forward. Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Despite the school's genuine commitment to reach out to them, to both inform them and elicit their views, there is still a little way to go to ensure that its communication with all parents is of the highest quality. The governing body possesses a range of valuable expertise and governors take their roles and responsibilities seriously. They work exceptionally hard to hold the school to account in a challenging and supportive manner.

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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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 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	1
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 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Rosary Catholic Primary School, Stroud, GL5 4AB

I am writing to say thank you very much for giving us such a warm welcome during our recent visit to The Rosary Catholic Primary School. We were impressed with the way you greeted us so courteously with warm, friendly smiles. We enjoyed talking with you about your work, seeing you play together and hearing you sing so joyously in assembly. What delightful children you are!

Your school is good in many ways. Here are some of the special things that it does particularly well:

- ?
- Your school looks after you very well and the adults want to do their best for you. ?
- Your behaviour and attitudes to learning are good; at times, they are exemplary. Everyone in the school cares for each other exceptionally well. ?
- In Reception, you get off to a flying start in all aspects of your learning; you make at least good progress in all other year groups and achieve good standards by the time you leave Year 6 although these are, at present, slightly better in English than in mathematics. ?
- Your teachers plan interesting activities for you, which help you to enjoy school. ?
- The school council takes its responsibilities seriously and it has made a significant contribution to the development of healthy lunches, which you appreciate. ?
- There are lots of clubs and visits, which you participate in enthusiastically. You contribute well to the local community, particularly performing to the senior citizens. ?
- Your headteacher and other adults are always looking for ways to make your school an even better place to be! They listen to your views and act upon them.

You are lucky to have such a caring headteacher, supportive adults and committed governors at the school. We have asked them to make sure that you all achieve as well as you can in mathematics and that the boys are helped to do as well as the girls in writing. We have also asked the school to ensure that all your parents are kept fully informed about what is happening in the school.

It was a real privilege to visit The Rosary Catholic Primary School. Keep up the good work and, most importantly, continue to enjoy your learning.

Best wishes for the future; we hope that you achieve great things!

Yours sincerely

Mrs Harlow HMI