

Our Lady of The Assumption Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119596
Local Authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	313351
Inspection dates	4–5 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Ruth James 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	193
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Eileen Guerin
Headteacher	Miss Melanie Haggerty
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2003
School address	Common Edge Road Blackpool Lancashire FY4 5DF
Telephone number	01253 762833
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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 the Assumption is a Catholic primary school that is slightly smaller than average. It is situated on the southern outskirts of Blackpool. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and very few pupils have a first language other than English. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is below average. Slightly more pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities than is typically found, but few have statements of special educational need.

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 the Assumption is a good school. The school's Catholic mission is central to its ethos. It is a welcoming and stimulating environment, with many impressive displays of pupils' work. Pupils really enjoy school and this is reflected in their above average attendance.

Pupils' achievement is good because of good teaching, care and support. This includes effective support from teaching assistants for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children arrive in Foundation Stage with levels of skills well below those typical for that age. In the past, progress in Foundation Stage has been satisfactory, but recent changes and outstanding teaching are helping to accelerate this. Pupils make good progress during Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 and leave the school with about average standards. Progress in mathematics and science was particularly good for those who left in 2007. In English progress was satisfactory, and this is recognised as a key area for improvement.

Pupils' personal development is good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils learn to take on tasks and responsibilities and by Year 6 perform a variety of school duties confidently. Behaviour observed by inspectors in lessons and around school was very good. While the majority of parents are very pleased with the school, a few do have concerns about behaviour, particularly at lunchtime.

Teaching and learning are good, and the best lessons include work well matched to individual needs. Teachers are friendly and encouraging. In some lessons, the work set for more able pupils is not demanding enough.

The curriculum provides pupils with a wide range of learning experiences that prepares them well for the future. Pupils learn about how to live safely and healthily. However, they do not have enough opportunities for extended writing, or to apply their writing skills in other subjects. There are good links with the local community and a broad range of educational visits, visitors and extra-curricular clubs adds interest and excitement to lessons. The Foundation Stage curriculum is a particular strength.

The school cares well for its pupils, and good support systems are in place, especially for those just starting school. Although many pupils know their targets in literacy they are not always clear about them in other subjects. Marking and written feedback are not always sufficiently focused on how pupils could improve.

The headteacher gives clear direction to the school's work, ably supported by the senior team and other staff. Together they are working effectively to maintain existing strengths and tackle weaknesses. The school has improved well since the last inspection and has a good capacity to continue to do so in future. Governance is good. The school's own evaluation of its effectiveness is accurate. It provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Reception class with knowledge and skills well below those typical for their age, particularly in speaking and listening, mathematics and emotional development. 2007 Foundation Stage data indicate that children's achievement is satisfactory. However, this is now a rapidly improving and effective Foundation Stage as a result of changes made since September 2007. The outstanding teaching and the rich curriculum mean that this provision is

now good. Well planned induction procedures help the children to settle into school quickly and they benefit from working within a spacious, well-resourced classroom. Staff expertise helps children to socialise well and promotes their excellent behaviour. Planning and assessment procedures are now very well focused, ensuring progress is rigorously tracked and activities are consistently well matched to meet all the children's learning needs. Children are well nurtured and cared for in a safe environment where they enjoy learning. Outdoor provision has improved providing a range of learning activities both indoors and outside. Leadership of the Foundation Stage is good and staff work together as a team to provide good learning experiences for children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve opportunities for extended writing across the curriculum, in order to raise standards in English by the end of Year 6.
- Ensure that there is consistency in setting individual targets, marking and feedback to guide pupils and help them to better understand how to improve their work.
- Develop more challenging work for more able pupils across the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good overall. Pupils make good progress as a result of good teaching and learning, and good personal development so that they leave having attained average standards. The school has met, or almost reached, most of its key attainment targets.

By the time pupils enter Year 1, standards are well below what is expected nationally, however this represents satisfactory progress overall in the Foundation Stage as many children enter the school with skills well below those expected. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1. The 2007 results of the assessments in reading, and writing at the end of Year 2 were broadly average, and they were above average in mathematics.

In Key Stage 2, this rate of progress is maintained. Achievement is good overall with particular strengths in mathematics and science. Pupils achieve well in reading but standards and progress in writing are not as good, with fewer pupils attaining the expected level. The school has already put measures into place to address this, but it is too early to see how effective these will be. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who have attended the school throughout make good progress due to the good teaching and extensive range of additional support they receive. More opportunities to provide challenge for the more able are needed to enable these pupils to improve and reach the higher levels in writing. Pupils do well in music and French as a result of staff expertise and specialist teaching in these subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Parents recognise how well the school's atmosphere and the quality of pastoral care support their children's personal and academic progress. As one commented, 'Our Lady's gives children a perfect start to life, enabling them to grow up willing and happy to make a positive contribution to society, with a desire to learn'. A few pupils and parents do have concerns about behaviour, but the vast majority of pupils behave well. They are considerate towards adults and each other. Their attendance is above average. Pupils feel safe and show understanding

of the arrangements for their safety and security. Living a healthy lifestyle is a strong feature of the school. Pupils know about the importance of healthy eating and why they need to exercise. They appreciate the range of healthy food choices and extra sporting activities available to them. Pupils enjoy lessons and are keen to do well. They enthuse about the work of the school council and the way the school listens and responds to their ideas and suggestions such as the recently formed art club. Pupils develop strongly in their personal qualities, building a level of social awareness, preparing them well for future learning and life as young adults. Year 6 pupils who take on responsibilities and roles, such as prefects or 'playground pals', exemplify this.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are typically good, and outstanding in the Foundation Stage. Pupils enjoy their lessons and other activities. They make good progress because of the good teaching. In the best lessons, work is carefully tailored to children's abilities, and teachers high expectations and warm encouragement help all to learn at a good pace and achieve well. Good teaching is enhanced by very effective support from teaching assistants for those who need it. Teachers are beginning to encourage the development of pupils' independent learning skills, particularly amongst older pupils. Appropriate use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) in some lessons. In a few lessons, there is sometimes too much whole class teaching, and more able pupils are set work that is not demanding enough. Assessment and tracking of progress are thorough and comprehensive. Marking of pupils' work on a day-to-day basis is of variable quality, and feedback is not always specific enough to help pupils to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum which meets the needs of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, particularly sport and music. The use of ICT to enhance learning across the curriculum is developing. The Foundation Stage curriculum is particularly well planned and outdoor provision is an improving feature. The SEAL (social and emotional aspects of learning) programme successfully promotes pupils' personal development. Pupils benefit from French lessons in Years 3 and 4, and from specialist music teaching. Educational trips, visits and speakers are used to enhance the curriculum. Cross-curricular links are beginning to be made. For example, the visit to a Victorian classroom which occurred during the inspection involved literacy, and drama, as well as history. However, planned opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in all subjects are not fully developed. Provision for the most able pupils does not always provide sufficient challenge.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good quality care and support and these contribute positively to pupils' personal development and well-being. Parents speak warmly of the school and emphasise how well their children are cared for. 'My child is very happy. The teachers and staff are understanding and caring if my child is having problems or is anxious.' Health and safety arrangements and a

child protection policy are in place to safeguard pupils, but administration arrangements are not sufficiently robust. Vulnerable pupils are well looked after and the school works effectively with a range of agencies to support them. Well trained support staff provide good academic and personal support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language. Overall, academic guidance is satisfactory. Teachers assess pupils regularly and their progress is tracked rigorously. However pupils do not always know how well they have done or how they can improve due to inconsistencies in marking of work and the sharing of individual improvement targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The school's self-evaluation is largely accurate. It identifies the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The headteacher gives clear direction to the school's work and she is well supported by her senior team, together with the rest of the staff. Teamwork is strong and this contributes to improvement. Governors are very supportive of the school and aware of the school's priorities. They have overseen a number of improvements to the accommodation. Recent staff absences are being dealt with appropriately to minimise the impact on learning. The school development plan focuses on identified priorities. Subject coordinators are increasingly taking on responsibility for the quality of provision in their subject areas. Progress tracking systems and thorough analyses of national test papers are contributing to their planning. The school now gives good value for money and is well-placed to continue to improve.

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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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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 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	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No
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

6 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Our Lady of The Assumption Catholic Primary School, Blackpool, FY4 5DF

Thank you very much for the friendly welcome you gave us when we came to visit your school. We really enjoyed meeting you, and seeing all your lovely work on display. The school looks after you well. When children start at school they are helped to settle, and the changes made in Reception are a good improvement.

Most of your parents are very happy with the school. We thought your behaviour in lessons and around school was very good, but a few of you and your parents told us that you are concerned about the behaviour of a small number of pupils.

You make good progress at school, especially in mathematics and science. This is because of the good teaching you receive. Support assistants also help you to learn and get as much as you can from your lessons. Many of you told us how much you enjoy the activities your school offers, including the sports activities which help you to stay healthy. It was good to see so many of Year 5 dressed in Victorian costume for the visit to a Victorian classroom during the inspection.

Although yours is a good school, we found there are some things that could be improved. We have asked your headteacher and teachers to give you more opportunities to practise your writing skills in all your subjects. We have also asked your teachers to share your targets with you for all subjects, and explain in marking how you can improve your work. We want to make sure that all of you are given work that extends you further, so we have asked that some of you are given more challenging tasks.

We know that your headteacher and all the staff are working very hard to help all of you achieve as much as you can. We are sure that you will all continue to work hard, especially in literacy, and we wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth James HMI

Lead inspector