

Our Lady's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124321
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	316521
Inspection dates	6–7 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Rob Huddleday HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	222
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Derek Grey
Headteacher	Stella Adcock
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
School address	Watkin Street Fenton Stoke-on-Trent ST4 4NP
Telephone number	01782 235385
Fax number	01782 235385

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Our Lady's is an average sized primary school serving an inner urban area. Almost all of its pupils come from White British backgrounds. A very small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals and with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are broadly average. The children's attainment on entry to the Nursery is generally below that expected for their age.

When the school was last inspected it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to provide an acceptable standard of education and was not demonstrating that it had the capacity to improve. Since that time it has received regular monitoring visits from Her Majesty's Inspectors. The current headteacher was appointed in January 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. The governors, headteacher and subject leaders have shown that the school now has good capacity to improve. They have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have acted effectively to ensure that the school provides satisfactory value for money. The leadership team's rigorous monitoring of all aspects of provision and its readiness to challenge underperformance have lifted the quality of teaching to satisfactory. In some instances, the teaching is good with outstanding features, but there are still some lessons which lack sufficient pace and stimulus to bring the very best out of the pupils.

Standards are improving and, although below average in 2007, are set to rise significantly by the end of the current academic year. Achievement is satisfactory and is also improving as the pupils make increasingly better progress in their lessons. Nevertheless, the school is aware that below average standards in writing remain one of the biggest hindrances to the pupils' greater success across the curriculum.

The pupils have played their part in the school's improvement by responding enthusiastically to the school's higher expectations of them. Their behaviour and attendance have improved and are now good. The pupils participate keenly in opportunities to support the community, whether this is through raising funds for charities, becoming a member of the school council, or helping younger pupils.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The children make satisfactory progress in all areas of learning and reach levels broadly similar to those achieved in other schools in Stoke, which are a little below those found nationally. The children's progress in aspects of literacy has accelerated recently and is now good as a result of a well focused programme of teaching about letters and sounds. The children enjoy school and quickly develop in confidence. Their personal development is fostered well and their individual strengths and weaknesses are carefully noted and provided for. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and is often good. The curriculum is broadly based and relevant to the children's needs, allowing them suitable opportunities to choose from a wide range of practical activities, as well as to benefit from direct teaching. The Foundation Stage is led and managed effectively.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by identifying opportunities to develop key skills within all subjects.
- Ensure that all lessons are taught interestingly at a good pace and with appropriate challenge for all pupils.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement has improved significantly and is now satisfactory in English, mathematics and science. The pupils made especially notable progress in Year 6 in the run up to the 2007 national tests. The pupils in nearly all other year groups also began to make better progress as the year unfolded. Although there is still a significant legacy of underachievement across the school, the proportion of pupils on track to reach age related expectations continues to increase. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the extra support they receive to boost their performance. Pupils of all abilities are building securely on previously attained skills, but standards in writing are rising only slowly and remain well below where they should be. In all subjects, attainment at the end of both key stages was below average in 2007, but evidence from pupils' work indicates that it will be average in 2008.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of the pupils are good. Pupils enjoy coming to school, as can be seen from their good attendance levels. They are friendly and welcoming to visitors and present themselves well when they go out of school. Pupils say that behaviour in lessons has improved. They have a clear understanding of how to behave and express concerns when other pupils occasionally do not meet their high expectations and their learning is interrupted. There is a strong ethos of respect for teachers and each other and pupils say that they feel part of a big family.

Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community, raising funds for charity and taking part in community and church activities. Older pupils further emphasise the family ethos of the school by caring for younger ones and taking on responsibilities in the dining hall and around the school. The democratically elected school council is active in improving the school environment, resulting in better playground equipment and facilities. The pupils' understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle can be seen in the enthusiasm for sport and physical exercise from the youngest age. Pupils understand how to eat healthily through menus provided in the dining hall and from 'Cook and Eat' sessions in which parents can take part. Although the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, awareness of what it means to be part of a multi-cultural society is less well developed. The school recognises that pupils need to develop further the key skills that will promote their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The teachers have a sound knowledge of their subjects, illustrated in the clarity of their lesson planning. The introductions to lessons are usually well pitched and the teachers help pupils understand the purpose of activities and how this will contribute to their mastery of specific skills. Teachers are developing the use of interactive whiteboards to engage the pupils' interest, although sometimes this is a little laboured. Relationships throughout the school are good and, consequently, pupils behave well and are keen to take an active part in the lessons. Most teachers employ a variety of teaching strategies and approaches, often emphasising practical

activities, to enhance the pupils' enjoyment and benefit learning. Sometimes, the introductions to lessons are too long or do not capture the pupils' enthusiasm and the pace of learning slows. Usually, most of the tasks set for the pupils are suitably demanding but, on occasions, the work for the more able pupils does not challenge them. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning because they are well informed and effectively deployed, providing the pupils with good support and encouragement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum enables pupils to study a broad range of subjects and this contributes to their satisfactory progress. Where appropriate, links are beginning to be made between subjects, with a particular emphasis on literacy and numeracy, but these are at a very early stage of development. The school is currently working to develop the use of information and communication technology in a similar way. Good use is made of specialist sports coaches to support the work in physical education. In the Foundation Stage, there is a suitable balance between independent learning and more directed tasks, and good use is made of the outdoor facilities. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are carefully monitored to ensure that programmes of work are appropriate. The good emphasis throughout the school on developing pupils' personal and social skills contributes to pupils' safe and healthy lifestyles. There is a wide range of outings, residential visits and clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school is rightly proud of its caring ethos. Adults lead by example in the way they relate to others and there is a strong emphasis on caring and respecting each other, promoting good manners and courteous behaviour. Vulnerable children are cared for well and their families supported in partnership with a variety of agencies. The school nurse runs weekly drop in sessions and child protection and safeguarding procedures are robust. The progress of pupils is closely tracked and the pupils are involved in setting appropriate targets, which are shared with their parents.

Support for pupils with learning difficulties is good. Individual pupils are identified early to enable further support in the form of regular intervention groups. All teachers and assistants have received training to enable them to support these pupils effectively and good practice and expertise are shared.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's quiet, but steely, determination to raise standards sets the tone for the school. She provides clear direction about what is required and all staff know where they stand. She is well supported by senior staff who have grown quickly into their roles. Monitoring is extensive and well focused, resulting in relevant points for action and greater consistency in the quality of the school's work. The school uses data about the pupils' performance extremely well to evaluate the impact of provision and to identify where other actions are necessary to tackle underachievement. Targets are very challenging and based clearly on the highest expectations for each pupil. The leadership team recognises that the school has further to go

to enable all pupils to achieve their potential. It has demonstrated good capacity to bring about improvement, for example in behaviour, teaching and standards in the core subjects, especially reading and science. There is an ambitious and broad vision, shared by governors, for the school's future development.

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?	3
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?	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	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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

8 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Our Lady's Catholic School, Stoke-On-Trent ST4 4NP

I would like to thank you for the welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. Thank you for talking with us and giving us your views. We enjoyed coming into lessons and assemblies and watching how you learn. We have decided that the school has improved since the last inspection and no longer requires regular visits from us.

This is what the school does well.

- The headteacher is doing a good job and has made many improvements with the support of the teachers.
- Some of the teaching is exciting and helps you make rapid progress.
- Standards of work, especially in reading and science, are rising.
- The school is keeping a better check on how well you are doing.
- You enjoy school and your attendance is good.
- The school is a calm and happy place and your behaviour is good.
- You take part in many activities outside normal lessons and are proud of the successes in sports competitions against other schools.
- The contribution you make to charity work and your local community is outstanding.

This is what we have asked your teachers to do to make things even better.

- Ensure that all lessons are exciting and set work for you that helps you learn quickly.
- Improve how well you are doing in literacy, especially the standard of your writing.

I am sure you will do all that you can to help the school continue improving and I wish you every success.

Yours sincerely Rob Huddleday Her Majesty's Inspector

8 November 2007

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Yours sincerely



Rob Hubbleday
Her Majesty's Inspector