

Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102843
Local Authority	Redbridge
Inspection number	323701
Inspection date	12 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Alan Jarvis

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	473
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jenni Braysher
Headteacher	Mr Mark Poulter
Date of previous school inspection	18 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Chestnut Drive Wanstead London E11 2TA
Telephone number	020 8989 9521

Age group	3–11
Inspection date	12 March 2009
Inspection number	323701

Fax number

020 8989 3788

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school, and investigated the following issues:

- how well learners in Years 1 to 6 are helped to make progress
- how well curriculum improvements have contributed to pupils' enjoyment, personal development and academic progress
- how good the provision is in the Early Years Foundation Stage especially the curriculum.

Evidence was gathered from an analysis of pupils' test results, current assessment and tracking data, and observation of lessons. Parent questionnaires and discussions with the headteacher, senior staff, governors and pupils also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Our Lady of Lourdes is an oversubscribed two-form-entry primary school. Some places are allocated to pupils from adjacent boroughs. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. An above average proportion of pupils is from minority ethnic groups, but an average proportion has English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average and increasing. These pupils generally need support for their speech and language, or for their autistic spectrum difficulties. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is in a part-time Nursery and two Reception classes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Our Lady of Lourdes is an outstanding school. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive and its popularity is growing. Typical of many others, two parents wrote, 'This wonderful school continues to improve' and 'Pupils do very well academically, but also learn to be a boon to society'. The warm, caring Catholic ethos is evident each morning, as the headteacher and assistant headteacher greet parents and pupils as they arrive and answer any queries. Around the school this is seen in the high quality of relationships and clear promotion of Christian values which underpin pupils' outstanding personal development, especially their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

Achievement is outstanding because pupils not only do extremely well in English, mathematics and science, but also in many other areas such as music, physical education and topic work. Progress is very rapid in reading, and standards are exceptionally high by the end of Year 6. This is because reading has a high priority: a love of reading is fostered through book fairs, storytelling and visiting authors. Many parents provide very good reading support at home and encourage their children to be active readers. Standards are also extremely high in science, and again rapid progress is made because pupils are highly motivated by the practical, scientific investigations. In addition, pupils are encouraged to work independently and explore their own lines of enquiry. Progress in writing is not quite as strong, but standards are well above average by the end of Year 6. The school has already put in place good measures to further boost progress, which are already having a positive impact on levels of attainment. This is particularly the case in Years 3 to 6, where pupils now have more opportunities to write, particularly in non-fiction genres, and increasingly use other subjects to foster writing development. These steps are now being replicated in Years 1 and 2, where progress is improving. However, more work is needed to consolidate recent gains and ensure that levels of attainment are as good as they are in reading and mathematics. Standards in mathematics are also well above average; progress is again accelerating as provision is fine-tuned. For example, pupils now have more opportunities to solve mathematical problems, and carefully targeted support is given to the small number of pupils who fall behind, or whose standards might easily be boosted.

Pupils who find learning difficult, or who need help with their language or other needs, make excellent progress because of the high quality of the support they receive. The work of the special educational needs coordinator and the adults who specifically work with these pupils is organised very well. As one parent wrote, 'The support given to my child has been very good, and I have been kept well informed about my child's progress through planned meetings and speaking to staff on request.' The school also makes very good efforts to challenge the most-able pupils through work in lessons and special events, as is shown by the sizeable number that sustain a high level of performance throughout the school across subjects.

Pupils' exceptional achievement is due to the excellent teaching and learning which leaders have sustained during a period of staff turnover. There are many areas of consistency. For example, relationships are very good, and as a result pupils' behaviour is excellent in all classes. Marking, too, is excellent: teachers mark pupils' work in colour to highlight where pupils have reached the high standards expected, and use a contrasting colour to pinpoint areas for improvement. What stands out in many lessons is pupils' high levels of confidence, and their ability to work well either independently or in small groups. As a result, little time is lost in learning, with pupils providing strong mutual support for each other. This is helped by the very effective way in which pupils assess each other's work and focus on their challenging targets.

Improvements have been made, to ensure that the purpose of each lesson is made very clear and is tailored to pupils' different abilities, and this has paid off. As a result, pupils are not only crystal clear about what they are learning, but also about what they need to show in order to demonstrate success in the quality of work they produce.

Leaders have strengthened the already very strong curriculum in order to increase enjoyment for all, but especially for boys and vulnerable pupils. For example, more outside trips have taken place to broaden pupils' experiences, such as those to Colchester Castle and the local fire station. However, the most successful of these has been the Year 6 residential visit to France, which pupils say was 'fabulous' and which helped support their French skills. Topics such as 'The Great Fire of London', 'Fantasy Worlds' and 'Red Riding Hood' have captured pupils' imagination, and helped to develop their investigative, collaborative and creative skills extremely well. The school celebrates its cultural diversity through well-planned curricular activities such as Black History Month and different faith festivals, helping them to develop an excellent understanding of other peoples' customs and beliefs. A number of outside providers have helped stimulate learning in topics such as 'The Egyptians' and 'Rocks and Soils', adding greatly to pupils' enjoyment. Pupils greatly benefit from a wide range of clubs and activities such as the splendid after-school salsa dancing.

Outstanding care, guidance and support, together with very effective programmes for pupils' personal, social, health and emotional development, result in excellent overall personal development. Pupils say, 'Everyone here is really friendly. If someone new joins, we help them settle in and make new friends.' What is really impressive is how well the pupils set and adopt high standards of behaviour. They understand that 'Everyone is equal in the eyes of God,' and how important it is to be tolerant of others and to 'give generously to charity and people who need help'. Older pupils help support younger ones by acting as 'guardian angels' and 'reading buddies'. Leaders have communicated the importance of regular attendance to parents. In turn, they have responded well, and the generally good attendance is improving further. Very good links have been established between the school and parents through high-quality newsletters and home/school contact sheets. These are very helpful to parents, helping to bring about a constructive dialogue between home and school. They also give parents a very clear idea of their children's targets and how they can help them to achieve these. A vibrant parent-teacher association helps to cement this relationship.

The extremely well-focused work of the headteacher and assistant headteacher, who are supported by a very able team of middle managers and governors, is a key factor in the continuing success of the school. Financial management and value for money are both excellent. The school is far from complacent, and has a genuine desire to seek further improvement. One example of this is in further developing its provision for community cohesion. Excellent action has been taken to forge links with the diverse local community and further afield. This has had a very good impact on developing pupils' common values and their awareness of diversity. The governors have good plans to look even further beyond the school's Catholic mission, but acknowledge that the already effective evaluation of provision could be sharper still. The particularly strong improvement since the last inspection, and the well-focused plans for improvement based upon a very clear self-evaluation, indicate that the school has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Early Years Foundation Stage is a beacon of outstanding practice. Vibrant displays of children's work provide a very rich and stimulating learning environment that gives young children a very good start to their education. A parent rightly commented, 'This is a wonderful school with dedicated staff - a happy and caring environment perfect for learning.' Children make outstanding progress in all areas of learning because the teaching is excellent. Children enter the school with expected levels of expertise in all six areas, but levels of attainment are much higher than expected by the end of their Reception Year. Practical activities are organised exceptionally well in both classrooms and outdoor areas, and resources are used very effectively. Children enthusiastically participate in all activities. For example, children in the Nursery enjoyed sowing sunflower seeds, and loved tasting the Irish porridge that they cooked. Reception children visited the local library, and not only enjoyed a story but also developed their library skills. There is a good balance of teacher-directed activities and those that children choose for themselves. Teaching assistants are well trained and they promote learning effectively. Children who have speech or language needs are very well supported, and are included in all that is offered.

A very strong partnership with parents allows children to settle quickly into learning. Children are assessed carefully, with an overview made of their attainment on entry, and their subsequent progress tracked meticulously. The information is used successfully to plan their next steps in learning. Provision for children's welfare is outstanding, and as a result they feel secure and become confident learners. The relationships with adults and peers are warm and supportive, and friendships across culture and race are very strong. As a result, children's personal development is outstanding and their behaviour is impeccable. Visitors such as actors, storytellers, drummers, and parents who help cook food from their diverse heritages, bring the curriculum to life. Both the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage phase leader are outstanding, and this results in continual improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Sharpen the monitoring and evaluation of community cohesion to ensure that the impact of provision is as high as it can be.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
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?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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**

24 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School, London, E11 2TA

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit. May I particularly thank the school council, who were so helpful when answering my questions. You are proud of your school, and you have every right to be, because it is an outstanding school.

Here are some of the really good things we liked most about your school that sets you apart from many others.

- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes get off to a flying start and make excellent progress in everything they do.
- You make fantastic progress in reading and science throughout the school.
- Pupils who need extra support, or who might easily boost their levels of attainment, are given very good support to help them learn as well as they can.
- Teaching is excellent, especially the marking and the way that teachers make the point of each lesson so that what you need to achieve is very clear.
- The teachers have looked very carefully at what you are taught. The improvements in topic work, visits, and teachers from outside really help you to enjoy school and develop your confidence, independence and creativity.
- Your behaviour is impeccable, as is the way you work independently or in small groups in lessons.
- You really know right from wrong, the importance of getting on with people, and the importance of giving generously to people less fortunate than yourselves.

To improve the school even further, I have asked the teachers and governors to look carefully at how successful their plans for community development are.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Alan Jarvis

Lead Inspector