

The Oratory Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103427
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323823
Inspection dates	15–16 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Martin Cole

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)	232
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	G P Jones / Sabastian Jones
Headteacher	Clare Dickinson
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Oliver Road Ladywood Birmingham B16 9ER
Telephone number	01214 540600

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	15–16 June 2009
Inspection number	323823

Fax number

01214 541978

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized primary school in which just over a third of the pupils are White British. Others are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds, mostly mixed heritage or Black British. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is much higher than usually found. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. A very small number of pupils are at an early stage of learning English.

The school's Early Years Foundation Stage provision consists of a Nursery and Reception Unit.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Pupils of all backgrounds achieve well both in their academic work and in their personal development. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Far-sighted and energetic leadership is bringing substantial improvement to the school. Relationships with parents and the community are excellent.

From their early days in the Nursery, pupils grow greatly in confidence, enjoy learning and take pride in their achievement. One older pupil said of the school, 'A great place to learn, and it's fun to be here.' Pupils feel happy and safe at school, thanks to the excellent pastoral care provided. High expectations, firm guidance and adults' example make pupils thoughtful and respectful toward others. They make an excellent contribution to the school and wider community. Pupils from very varied backgrounds get on well together and behaviour is good. They have a good understanding of how to keep healthy by exercising and eating sensibly. They join keenly in the good range of exercise opportunities available. In this calm, supportive and stimulating environment, pupils willingly take full advantage of the good teaching and curriculum provided. Consequently, they achieve well, both at the Foundation Stage and thereafter. By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6, standards are in line with national averages. This represents good progress from their starting points, which are well below expectations when they start in the Nursery.

A particular strength of the teaching is the way it challenges pupils to give of their best while also making learning fun. Pupils want to learn and lessons are happy and busy events where pupils try hard. In recent months the school has adopted several new strategies within the teaching and learning. These are often effectively employed and are helping to improve pupils' progress. However, there is some inconsistency from class to class in the success with which these strategies are used. The rich, broad and lively curriculum provides well for the range of pupils' abilities, needs and interests. The range of educational visits and visitors, special events and after-school clubs is excellent. These greatly enhance pupils' opportunities to learn, to find enjoyment and to grow personally as confident, outgoing and responsible members of the community.

Very close partnership with parents and other agencies makes an excellent contribution to the wide range of ways in which the school provides good care, guidance and support to pupils. One such way is the newly established Family Learning Centre where parents or carers and their children have opportunities to learn alongside each other. While the pastoral guidance of pupils is excellent, guidance on academic matters is less well developed, though still satisfactory. The older pupils are generally aware from teachers' marking and the targets that they are given how to improve their work. Younger pupils, however, are not helped to understand clearly enough how they can do better.

The school's many good qualities reflect the enthusiastic, determined and visionary leadership of the headteacher. She inspires a dedicated and hard-working staff team in a shared drive to give all pupils a high quality education and equal opportunities. Staff teamwork is excellent. Many improvements, including raised standards and significantly improved attendance, have been made since the headteacher's appointment a little over a year ago. The school keeps a close check on its own performance and, through self-evaluation, knows exactly how it can be better still. Its capacity for further improvement is good.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the Nursery and Reception unit soon learn to enjoy their early experiences of school and to prosper in the very caring and supportive atmosphere. Great attention is paid to the children's welfare and ensuring that they are happy at school. Consequently, they grow rapidly in confidence and independence. Progress in personal, social and emotional development is outstanding, and it is good in all other areas of learning. Good achievement leads to overall standards at the end of the Reception Year that are close to the national average. Rates of progress and standards have improved in comparison with previous years. The children benefit from good teaching and an excellent curriculum that includes well-planned, lively, attractive and productive activities, indoors and out. There are very good accommodation and learning resources. Staff are very effectively deployed and there is close teamwork amongst teachers and their assistants. This provides for both intensive teaching of the children, sometimes in small groups or individually, as well as good opportunities for children to explore and choose for themselves. Staff keep a good watch over children's progress but recognise that their planning would benefit from assessments that were still more precise. Good leadership and management have resulted in a range of valuable recent improvements and improved progress and standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that new strategies for teaching and learning are used to consistently good effect across the school.
- Give all pupils clearer guidance on how to improve their work through marking and setting targets for the next steps in learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Both boys and girls of all abilities and backgrounds, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve well. Pupils make good progress, particularly during their earliest and latest years in the school, and leave with broadly average standards. National test results for 2008 suggested that a small number of more able pupils achieved less well than expected in mathematics and science. However, detailed records of the progress of present Year 6 pupils show them to be on track to attain the school's best results of recent years. More able pupils are doing much better in mathematics and science, as a result of changes in the teaching.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils take great strides in developing confidence, independence and responsibility. As they learn to value themselves, they learn also to value and respect others. They become increasingly thoughtful and caring, qualities evident in the happy and supportive way they work and play together. The culturally diverse but harmonious community of the school, and close links with the equally diverse neighbourhood, promote pupils' appreciation of lifestyles different from their own. Pupils respond keenly to a wealth of opportunities to contribute responsibly to the life of the school and the wider community. They discuss social matters and express their point of view, as when they meet with senior staff to discuss school matters or with local councillors to talk about neighbourhood issues. Pupils show initiative, for example, in making their own

proposals for after-school clubs and helping to organise them. All of these personal qualities, together with good progress in basic skills, are preparing pupils well for the demands of future adult and working life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers manage pupils skilfully with warmth and encouragement. They make learning enjoyable with lessons that are imaginatively planned to build on pupils' interests and everyday experiences. Attractive visual resources are well used to demonstrate key teaching points and support learning. Pupils relish the good many opportunities for practical and outdoor learning and making use of computers. Teachers assess pupils' progress carefully and set tasks generally well suited to pupils' differing abilities and needs. Carefully devised additional support, often effectively provided by teaching assistants, enables pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make good progress. Pupils at an early stage of learning English are given extra individual support. New teaching and learning strategies adopted in recent months, for example, in marking work, setting targets for pupils and encouraging active learning through discussion, often work well but are not consistently effective in all classes. Senior staff recognise that continuing checks and support for teachers are necessary to extend successful practice to all.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is lively and stimulating. Systematic programmes for teaching academic knowledge, skills and understanding are combined with imaginative strategies for developing pupils' personal qualities, stimulating interest and providing enjoyment. Lessons often make well-planned links between subjects or between academic learning and aspects of personal development. A good example of this was seen in a numeracy lesson for younger pupils. Learning basic skills through spending money in a simulated café was exploited as an opportunity to remind pupils of the wisdom of selecting healthy items from the menu. A recent major reorganisation of computer resources is extending opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology to support their learning. This is now a satisfactory feature which the school has plans to develop still further. A good many of the excellent range of educational visits, visitors, special events, cultural activities and after-school clubs exploit the school's very strong links with the local community and with other schools and bodies.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The very firm commitment of school staff to pupils' needs, combined with a very strong partnership with parents, as well as formal procedures, effectively ensure pupils' welfare and safety. Pupils and parents have much confidence in the unstinting support of the school staff. Staff have a good understanding of individuals' needs through careful checks on pupils' academic and personal development. The range of ways the school supports pupils' needs is wide and includes a 'nurture group'. Here, pupils identified as needing specific help meet with staff in small groups for activities that build confidence and encourage them to share and resolve personal difficulties. Close links with local authority and charitable organisations provide expert support for children and parents in overcoming the varied personal difficulties that may be

encountered in a neighbourhood with a very high level of social deprivation. The school goes to great lengths to encourage regular attendance and has raised the level significantly in the last year. In academic matters, guidance for pupils has been strengthened recently. However, there is some inconsistency in practice, with the guidance for the oldest pupils proving to be the most successful. Younger pupils have some difficulty understanding or remembering targets they have been given or knowing from teachers' marking how they can move forward in their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's vision for the school is clear, imaginative and ambitious and it takes a very comprehensive view of what the school should do for its pupils. The vision is fully shared and supported by a strong team of senior staff who work closely together and with the headteacher. Along with the commitment and hard work of other colleagues, this has led to much improvement across many aspects of the work of the school. Not surprisingly, several key developments which are still quite new have yet to be fully and consistently implemented. Pupils and parents are very appreciative of the many improvements. Particularly good progress has been made in extending the school's contribution to community cohesion, especially at the local level. Teamwork has been greatly enhanced, both within the school and stretching out to involve parents, community and city organisations in a mutually beneficial way. Further developments involving international links are beginning to emerge. Governors share and strongly support the vision for school improvement and keep a good watch over the school's performance.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
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?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

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?	2
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	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

17 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Oratory Roman Catholic Primary School, Birmingham B16 9ER

The inspectors who visited your school recently would like to thank all of you for your friendly welcome. We enjoyed meeting and talking to you.

It was good to see that you enjoy school and that you get on really well with each other and with the adults. You understand right and wrong very well and you are thoughtful and respectful towards others. We think your behaviour is good and that you have very sensible attitudes to school and to your work. This is helping you to make good progress at school.

Some of you told us how much help the teachers and the other adults give you. We saw this for ourselves. All of the adults look after you really well. The teachers give you the right sort of lessons and provide suitable work to help you learn. They organise lots of special activities, visits and visitors that make school fun.

We have said that yours is a good school which is giving you a good education. The adults in charge of the school are doing a good job and they are trying hard to make it better still. We have suggested two ways that the school could help you learn still more successfully.

- The teachers are using some new ideas in lessons; we want them to make sure these work equally well in all classes.
- We are asking the teachers to help you understand more clearly exactly how you can improve your work.

We hope you will play your part in making these changes successful so that you make even better progress. We wish you the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Martin Cole

Lead inspector