

Holy Rosary Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104373
Local Authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	324032
Inspection dates	22–23 October 2008
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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	157
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	21
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janette Parry
Headteacher	Judi Askew
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hickman Avenue Wolverhampton WV1 2BS
Telephone number	01902 558874

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	22–23 October 2008
Inspection number	324032

Fax number

01902 558869

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

About three quarters of the school's pupils are White British. Others are from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than normally found. An unusually high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils who start at the school or leave it at other than the usual age is exceptionally high. The school's Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) comprises a Reception unit for 30 children.

The former headteacher retired at the end of the previous school term. While governors try to appoint a successor, the school is currently led by an acting headteacher.

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. It is a very caring and close-knit community that, as several parents wrote, 'feels like a family'. Pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour allow them to take full advantage of the good teaching they receive. Consequently, they make good progress from their early days in Reception through to Year 6. Pupils start at the school with attainment that is generally well below the level expected at their age. However, by Year 6, their standards are similar to the national average. This is good achievement.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. Very good pastoral care ensures pupils feel happy and safe. They particularly value the excellent relationships they have with both adults and fellow pupils. They keenly join in lessons and in the wide range of after-school clubs. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay healthy, and take part enthusiastically in the good opportunities for exercise which are provided.

A significant strength of the good teaching is the skilful management of pupils. Lessons are calm, happy and purposeful events where teachers and pupils alike are fully focused on learning. Pupils say lessons are often fun. Teachers challenge pupils to do their best and provide plenty of encouragement and support. They plan generally suitable and engaging tasks for pupils. However, there are a few occasions when a small number of pupils are expected to tackle work that exceeds their capability or the level of support they receive. In a similar way, some Year 1 pupils find the challenges of their curriculum too great after what was expected of them in Reception. The school recognises these issues and has begun to make more precise assessments of pupils' progress and to use them to plan the work and support provided.

Overall, the curriculum is satisfactory. It adopts an effectively structured approach to teaching basic skills and a new system for teaching letter sounds is increasing progress in reading, especially amongst the youngest pupils. However, opportunities are not always taken to increase the relevance and enjoyment of pupils' work through links across the curriculum, or by allowing pupils to learn through information and communication technology (ICT).

Good leadership and management of the school have led to substantial improvement since the previous inspection. Standards have risen significantly. The acting headteacher, although in post for only a few weeks, has a very thorough understanding of the school's performance and is continuing the drive for improvement with the enthusiastic support of a very committed team of staff. All staff contribute fully to the school's excellent atmosphere of care, close relationships and commitment to equal opportunities. Governors are effective and supportive. They are taking much care in their attempts to appoint a suitably qualified headteacher for the future.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The well-managed provision in the Reception class includes good teaching, a well-planned curriculum and thorough arrangements for ensuring the children's welfare. These are helping the children to make good progress in both their personal development and their learning. Their attainment at the end of the year is generally below the national standard, although rising thanks to improving provision. A calm and happy atmosphere established through the staff's warm and caring approach soon leads the children to feel confident and safe in their new environment. The children respond well to encouragement to develop independence, as when

they register themselves on arrival or act as 'special helpers'. They enjoy the lively range of well-resourced activities which combine opportunities for constructive play with sessions of close, structured teaching by adults. Planning of activities is focused well on what the children need to learn and is beginning to benefit from adoption of a more precise approach to assessing each individual's needs. Good leadership and management have resulted in a number of improvements, including new outdoor resources for learning, although these are incomplete and not fully exploited.

What the school should do to improve further

- Press ahead with plans for more precise assessment of pupils' progress so that the work and support provided can be more finely tuned to their individual needs.
- Extend links across the curriculum and opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support their learning.
- Provide a more flexible curriculum for Year 1 pupils to provide all with a smooth transition from Reception.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

In both 2006 and 2007, Year 6 pupils' results in national tests were broadly in line with national averages. This represents good progress from the low attainment with which pupils started at the school. In both years, measures of pupils' progress from the Year 2 tests to the Year 6 tests were very high. Final results for the 2008 tests are not yet available but the school's own measures suggest they are likely to be broadly similar to the previous year's. Year 2 test results are generally below average, reflecting pupils' low starting attainment, but they still represent good progress. Many pupils join the school after the normal starting age; a significant number do so at a late stage of their primary education. These pupils also make good progress, though their standards are generally a little lower than those of pupils who have been at the school from age five. Pupils make good progress regardless of gender or background. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' excellent relationships with adults and each other help to account for their good attendance, sensible behaviour and the enjoyment clearly evident in their smiles. Following the staff's lead, pupils treat each other with respect and kindness, regardless of difference in background. They cooperate very well when working in teams or groups. Pupils behave safely and feel safe, insisting that bullying is not a problem in their school. They develop a very sensible attitude to learning. 'Teachers challenge us to make us better learners,' one pupil said. Year 6 pupils have a wide range of responsibilities for contributing positively to school life, but there are rather fewer such opportunities for younger pupils. Some good links with local community organizations help to develop responsible attitudes. Pupils know all about how to live a healthy life, although they do not always make healthy eating choices, for example about playtime snacks. Growing independence, confidence and teamwork skills are combining with good progress in literacy and numeracy to prepare pupils well for the demands of future adult and working life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers often make learning fun and their very skilful management of the pupils ensures that they attend well to their tasks and try hard. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards to give visual impact to ideas and explanations. Lessons are thoroughly planned around clearly defined intentions for what pupils of different abilities should learn. Teachers and teaching assistants give lots of patient support and encouragement to those finding difficulty. Teachers generally know their pupils' abilities and needs well but the recording of pupils' progress is not sufficiently rigorous or systematic to ensure every pupil receives the support or the challenges they need. Consequently, there are instances of a few pupils making less progress than they might. Sometimes, this occurs when the deployment of support staff across the school is not sufficiently matched to the needs of pupils. Teachers' marking is generally helpful but does not often suggest extra challenges for the most able to move on to.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school has well-structured programmes of work in all subjects. Provision for pupils' personal and social education is especially effective. The good range of after-school clubs, particularly in sport, is also a strength. The clubs, educational visits and special events such as the recent 'Environmental Day' enrich the curriculum valuably. However, the school misses opportunities to add to the relevance and fun of learning through links between subjects. There is a relative lack of opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their ICT skills while working at other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The very close, caring relationships staff make with pupils are supported by thorough formal procedures to safeguard pupils and ensure their welfare. Pupils find staff very approachable and responsive to any concerns they may have. The staff's close relationships with pupils help them know pupils well, but systems for monitoring academic progress occasionally prove insufficiently precise, for example in the case of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, improvement in such systems has recently begun. The guidance pupils receive on personal, social or emotional matters is especially good. Guidance on academic matters is mainly good. With the occasional exception of a few of the most able, pupils know how to improve their work. They understand the targets they are given and the pointers teachers include when marking their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school has made good improvement since the previous inspection. Good use has been made of training and expert guidance from local authority personnel to improve aspects of the teaching and curriculum, and thereby raise standards. Year 6 standards in English and mathematics were reported to be well below average three years ago, but they are now broadly

average. The new acting headteacher is maintaining the momentum of improvement very well. She has quickly identified scope for further improvement and has gained the confidence and support of staff. She has shown enterprise in developing a fruitful partnership with another local school to share staff expertise. This is, for example, helping the school to improve its management of support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Governors give good support to the school's effective checks on its own performance and to planning for improvement. The school knows clearly how it can be better still and is determined to make it happen. The capacity for further improvement is good. The school's positive and inclusive ethos extends to mutually beneficial and close relationships with parents and the local community. Parents think highly of the school.

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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 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?	2
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	2
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	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	3
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**

24 October 2008

Dear Pupils, Inspection of Holy Rosary Catholic Primary School, Wolverhampton, WV1 2BS

The inspectors who visited your school recently want to thank all of you for your friendly welcome. We really enjoyed the day we spent with you.

We were glad to see that you really enjoy school. We were very impressed by the excellent way you all get on with each other and with the adults. You have a sensible attitude to school and to your work. You behave well and you pay attention to your lessons and try hard. All of this is helping you make good progress. The teachers play their part by giving you good lessons. They give you lots of help and encouragement. The work they give you is helping you to learn a lot. You also enjoy the after-school clubs that help you learn still more and let you get plenty of exercise.

We have said that yours is a good school. All the adults take very good care of you. The adults in charge of the school are doing a good job by seeing that you have the sort of education you need. However, we have suggested three ways in which the school could be even better.

- We think that the teachers should keep a closer check on your progress to make sure every single one of you has the right sort of work and the help you need.
- We believe learning could be even more fun if the work you do in different subjects was linked together more. This should include giving you more opportunities to use computers to help you learn.
- We think activities in Year 1 should be more varied so that it is easier for children to change over from the sort of things they have done in Reception.

We have asked the teachers to try to make these changes. We hope you will play your part by continuing to try your hardest and to make full use of new opportunities you are given.

We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Cole Lead Inspector