

Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Nursery and Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104916
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	324130
Inspection dates	2–3 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Judith Clarke

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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)	551
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage	0
Appropriate authority	Chair of governors
Chair	Mrs Angela Frith
Headteacher	Mrs M Hillsdon
Date of previous school inspection	March 2006
School address	Grantham Road Southport PR8 4LT
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors. The inspectors visited 19 lessons and held meetings with senior leaders, governors, staff, pupils and parents. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including policies, the school improvement plan, pupils' work and school records indicating pupils' progress and attainment. The inspectors also scrutinised 50 school staff questionnaires and analysed 171 questionnaires returned by parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the current standards, progress and achievement of all groups of pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- the school priorities for improvement in mathematics and writing
- the leadership's clarity of vision and sense of purpose in maintaining the strong position reported in the last inspection
- whether all the pupils in the resourced settings are fully integrated with the whole school community to enable them to be well prepared for their next phase of schooling.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average-sized Catholic primary school. The school serves an area which has favourable socio-economic circumstances. Almost all the pupils are from a White British background, although an increasing number of pupils from abroad who do not speak any English are joining the school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, as are the numbers of pupils with statements of special educational needs. The school has on site resourced provision for pupils who have an autistic spectrum condition. There is a 4 place unit in the Nursery and the school provides 20 additional places for pupils in the 5 to 11 age range. Not all the children in the Nursery transfer into the Reception class; some transfer to other schools in the area. Inward mobility is higher than average as a number of pupils transfer from a local infant school at the beginning of Year 3. The school also recently welcomed pupils from a school which was closing.

The school holds a number of externally validated awards: the Inclusion Quality Mark, National Healthy School, Activemark and Artsmark Gold.

At the time of the inspection the headteacher had been in a post for a week; before this she had been deputy headteacher at the school. There is currently an acting deputy headteacher.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Our Lady of Lourdes is an outstanding school. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They are particularly appreciative of the outstanding care and support given to their children. They reflect that the school is active in promoting their children's self-confidence and self-esteem, along with a love of learning. Those parents of pupils who need extra help and support speak passionately of the expertise the school has in place. This enables the staff to support and guide pupils who have very complex needs. The pupils' response in lessons and around the school is exemplary. They are unfailingly polite, listen carefully when adults are talking to them and show excellent manners, holding doors open carefully for others to go through. These outstanding attitudes ensure that lessons and learning are purposeful and progress is good.

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children start the Nursery with skills that are at the levels expected for children of their age and they make good progress throughout both the Nursery and Reception classes. Assessments of these early gains are not always used well enough by the teachers on a day-to-day basis to plan the next steps in learning. Consequently, some opportunities are missed here to push the children's learning on. The children make particularly strong progress in their personal and social skills so that when they start Year 1 these are above the levels expected. The pupils continue to make good progress overall throughout Years 1 to 6. Standards at the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science are currently above average. Determined action by the senior leaders to improve standards throughout the school has had a positive impact and standards are rising. However, the school's comprehensive assessment information is not summarised clearly enough to enable teachers to make best possible use of it to pinpoint accurately pupils' next steps in learning.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress because of the considerable staff expertise in ensuring their educational, emotional and physical needs are fully met. Those pupils new to the country and new to the school are helped to rapidly feel part of the school community so they settle well and make good progress.

Pupils' achievement is good because teaching is strong and the curriculum interesting. Pupils feel engaged with their learning and make good progress in lessons. Pupils say that their teachers make sure that they feel safe in school and

they enjoy their lessons. They report that the school provides lots of exciting activities and they are always busy. Residential experiences and opportunities to learn to play woodwind and brass instruments gives the pupils chances to experience and learn different skills.

Senior leaders and managers take very effective action to bring about improvements in all that the school provides and the standards pupils reach. They have maintained the overall position reported in the previous inspection. The governors provide a range of skills and expertise which they use to good effect in school. Determined leadership has resulted in effective strategies being put in place to improve standards in writing and mathematics. The impact of these strategies is now clearly bearing fruit. The senior leaders have a wide range of expertise and take a very collegiate approach to school improvement and tackling the areas they have prioritised. Capacity for further improvement is good. Self-evaluation enables the school to identify correctly the appropriate priorities for further improvement and the school is active in pursuing excellence.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enable teachers to pinpoint exactly pupils' next steps in learning by
 - summarising assessment information more clearly
 - analysing termly tests to identify how well pupils are making progress
 - presenting information in a way that enables teachers to see at a glance those pupils in danger of underachieving so they can be given extra help.

- Improve day to day assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage by
 - ensuring daily assessments are used to plan next steps in learning to develop the children's skills.

How good is the overall outcome for individuals and groups of pupils?

1

Throughout the school the pupils show they are prepared to think hard, behave exceptionally well and listen carefully to their teachers. By the time pupils reach Year 6 their excellent behaviour and an impressive work rate often leads to outstanding progress in lessons because they are so focused on their learning. Thinking skills and skills of cooperation are effectively developed so that by the time pupils leave the school they are confident in their own abilities and supportive of others. The additional help provided for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very focused and specialised, which helps these pupils to do exceptionally well.

Standards at the end of Year 6 have dipped in the past two years, relating to the prior attainment of different cohorts and high pupil mobility; this was especially so in writing and mathematics. The school quickly noted this and put strategies in place to improve pupils' performance in writing and mathematics. The school's compelling evidence suggests that standards are rising and pupils are firmly on track to reach the very challenging targets set for them. School data show the current Year 6 are on track to reach at least above average standards in English, mathematics and

science at both the expected Level 4 and the higher Level 5. There is a similar picture of this clear improvement in the current Year 5. Improvements in standards in writing and mathematics show that the school's prioritisation of these areas is impacting positively. Consequently, the higher attaining pupils in Year 6 are doing considerably better than their peers in the previous two years.

Standards at the end of Year 2 are currently broadly average and school data and inspection evidence shows that this represents good progress for these pupils from their individual starting points.

Pupils who have statements of special educational needs, mostly because they are on the autistic spectrum make outstanding progress. This is because the staff are extremely skilled. They seek to develop their own individual expertise to the highest levels so that they are able to help the pupils to make the best of their school lives. They are unstinting in the way they share their expertise throughout the school community so that the whole school is a 'learning community'. This means that these pupils are fully integrated with the life and work of the school. Pupils who join the school at the beginning of Year 3 are very quickly assimilated into school life. They say they feel welcomed. The school is active in supporting those new to the school from abroad. Staff take great care in communicating with these pupils to help them fit in and feel valued.

Pupils, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils have opportunities to learn about different cultures and faiths and at the same time celebrate their own faith. This is a school with strong Christian values where the pupils say they are listened to and concerns are quickly resolved. They know how to keep safe from dangers, such as walking down the stairs, using the Internet and on the playground. Pupils enjoy their learning particularly when tasks are practical, hands on and demand the use of their 'thinking skills'. The pupils know how to stay healthy and participation in extra-curricular activities is strong. Attendance has improved and is average.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	1
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance	3
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1
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The quality of the school's work

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall; some outstanding lessons enable pupils to make outstanding progress. Support staff play an important role in class supporting those pupils who need some extra help with their learning. They are skilled at quickly identifying and targeting help to ensure the pupils make the best progress they can. Teachers carefully plan their lessons, ensuring that at all times the pupils are fully engaged whether they are consolidating their understanding or learning new things. Classroom techniques such as hot seating, talking partners and teamwork ensure that key concepts for learning are quickly developed and pupils' enthusiasm is maintained.

For those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are on the autistic spectrum the calm approach of the teaching and support staff enables them to feel confident and secure with their learning. Pupils engage on a visual as well as a verbal level to the real life situations they are presented with. A fine example of this was when the pupils were making toast and then deciding which topping would be best. Here lots of praise and encouragement ensured the pupils not only made progress but also enjoyed their learning. Challenging questions used with skill and precision by staff helped to develop pupils' responses to probing questions.

In Year 6 the streaming of pupils for mathematics has had a significant impact on the improved progress being made by the pupils. Similarly, improvements have been seen in the pupils' writing skills through providing more opportunities to write and practise their skills in other curriculum areas. For example, in the Year 5 history lessons the pupils looked carefully at evidence of what life was like in Tudor times from illustrations of this period. They were able to decide if the people shown were rich or poor and give convincing reasons to support their opinions.

Where lessons are less successful the tasks completed by the pupils do not always challenge them sufficiently and they do not make the swift progress they are capable of. This is often because of a lack of clarity of the exact next steps in pupils' learning. The comprehensive range of assessment materials is not always sufficiently precise enough to pinpoint those whose progress has stalled and slowed.

Marking of pupils' work is thorough and detailed. Pupils appreciate the time given by the teachers in marking their work and they say that staff are always willing to explain and make sure they understand what it is they have to do. Older pupils take ownership of their learning by checking their next steps in learning. They make sure that they address the issues raised by the teachers and ensure the teachers are aware that they have taken on board their advice and acted upon it.

The curriculum is undergoing a thorough review. It is being redesigned over a three year period to better promote the pupils' thinking and problem solving skills. These improvements are also recognised as areas where the school can further develop and bring about not only a more relevant set of learning experiences for the pupils, but add vibrancy and challenge to their learning.

Support for all pupils in the school is strong, the very inclusive nature of the school embraces all. All pupils, and especially the most vulnerable are exceptionally well helped so that all pupils say that they feel safe and know that adults will help them if they feel unhappy or troubled.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment	2
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and acting deputy headteacher are newly in post; however, both have previously been in posts of responsibility within the school. All senior leaders are committed to the further development of the school. Their expertise is wide ranging and they share a combined determination for maintaining the school's strengths and a strong commitment to further improvement. They support each other and take on roles, which ensure that they have a secure view across all aspects of provision in this large school. Continuing professional development is a strong feature, with many staff seeking additional qualifications which will help them better serve the needs of the pupils in their care. The sharing of expertise throughout the school is accepted practice and means that the collective expertise of the staff is enriched. Morale is high and staff feel empowered and informed about school development.

Monitoring of teaching and the analysis of pupil performance is very detailed and has ensured that the priorities identified in the school improvement plan are clearly focused on raising levels of attainment. This is most pronounced in mathematics and writing but is also demonstrated in the way attendance, the curriculum and the transition arrangements between Years Reception and Year 1 are being improved. The needs of all groups of pupils are carefully assessed and those who are most vulnerable given every support to help them to do their best. Strategic decisions have been made to support improvement and resources used to best advantage. The governing body is effective. Governors hold the school to account and have been clear about the next steps of the school's development. They think strategically and use their wide range of expertise to the best effect. Governors are known to the community, parents and pupils and are highly active around the school.

This is a very inclusive school. All pupils, regardless of their needs are fully included in all aspects of the school's work and given equal opportunity to succeed. Parents note the caring ethos of the school and have confidence that it will continue to work hard for the good of all the pupils. The school is rigorous in the way it ensures the safety of the pupils. At the time of the inspection these safeguarding procedures and policies were excellent. All appropriate government regulations are fully met and the

school is active in promoting the emotional and physical welfare of all pupils. Expert help and support is sought when required and systems within the school to support the pupils' emotional and physical needs are robust.

The school has a clear focus on promoting community cohesion. It has completed a thorough audit, produced a policy and an action plan and has begun to monitor the plan for improvement. The school has a clear perception of its place in the immediate, local and church communities and ensures that the pupils have a clear understanding of a more distant global community. The school is active in supporting a school in Africa and makes charitable church links with other distant areas. Within the school's own community the pupils understand that the needs of all pupils are met in different ways and know they personally benefit from learning alongside other pupils, some of whom have very complex needs.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	2
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	1
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	2
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	1
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	1
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	2
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They start school in the Nursery with skills that are broadly average overall. There are a small number of children in the Nursery with statements of special educational needs and they make outstanding progress in these early years because of the carefully planned opportunities available for them. Not all children transfer from the Nursery into the Reception class and some children from different settings also join the school at this time. Good relations are established with parents and carers and children settle quickly and confidently into the settings. By the end of the Reception Year the children's social and speaking skills are above average and their communication and mathematical skills are at the levels expected of children of their age. Teaching is good throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children in the Nursery show good levels of confidence as they respond to the teachers' enquiries about how to make the colour green in their observations of spring flowers. They chat happily and are confident as they choose their own activities. The older children in the Reception also demonstrate this happy enjoyment of learning. Their behaviour is exemplary. Sometimes in the Reception class the challenge for some of the children is not high enough. On these occasions, activities are over directed and do not always meet the needs of all the children. This is because, on a daily basis the teachers do not make

best use of assessments to inform their planning to meet the needs of each child. The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and is active in bringing about improvements. The children have recently planned and fundraised to create a Secret Garden for their use and this level of independence and initiative is impressive in these young children.

How good are the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
What is the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
Overall effectiveness: how well does the setting/school meet the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2

Views of parents and carers

Through the questionnaires and the meeting, parents expressed an overwhelming support for the school. They indicate that the school ensures that there are good relationships with parents and is particularly effective in meeting the needs of all pupils. For example, when their children join the school in Year 3, or move from Year 6 to the high school these transition points are managed very well and the pupils quickly settle. Parents on the whole feel they are well informed. Newsletters generally, and on the curriculum enable them to know what is happening in school. There are some parents who would wish for more information. The inspection finds that there are good opportunities for parents to gather specific information from the school and the website.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a Key Stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



4 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Nursery and Primary School,
Southport, PR8 4LT

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to thank you for the welcome you gave us when we visited you to inspect your school. We very much enjoyed speaking to you about your work and watching you during lessons and playtimes. We consider Our Lady of Lourdes is an outstanding school. We were particularly impressed by the way you behave in and around the school. For example, the very good manners you showed when you held open the doors so that others could go through first. In lessons you concentrate hard, listen carefully to the teachers and try hard with the tasks that are set for you. This helps you to make good progress with your work.

We could see that the teachers are working hard to make sure that the work you have is not too hard and not too easy. This is important as this will help you keep on track with your learning. So we have asked the teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage to look carefully at the assessments they do of the children's achievements each day so that they can plan their lessons better for all the children. For the older pupils in Years 1 to 6, we have asked the teachers to summarise all the assessment information they have about how well you are doing, so that it is easier to use when planning new work and they can see quickly if anyone is falling behind. We could see that you really enjoy your work in school and note that the younger children have recently created a 'Secret Garden.' Older pupils in Year 4 are busy learning to play a wind or brass instrument and we would encourage them to keep practising hard. Year 6 pupils are fortunate: they have the opportunity to go to Robinwood where they have the chance to do lots of exciting things.

We hope that you will continue to enjoy your time at Our Lady of Lourdes and that you all keep working hard. We all wish you well for the future.

With Best wishes

Judith Clarke
Lead inspector

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