

Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106489
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	324412
Inspection dates	27-28 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Joan McKenna

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. 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	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	116
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Reynolds
Headteacher	Mr Damian Winstanley
Date of previous school inspection	March 2006
School address	Downall Green Lane Bryn Wigan Lancashire WN4 0LZ
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited seven lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, a group of pupils and a representative of the local authority. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including the school improvement plan, records of pupils' progress and attainment, and pupils' work. The inspector also analysed the 48 questionnaires returned by parents.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work and looked in detail at the following.

- Pupils' attainment, progress and learning, including in writing and for higher attaining pupils.
- The extent to which teaching and the curriculum meet the needs of all groups of pupils, especially higher attainers and those in mixed-age classes.
- The impact of care, guidance and support on pupils' personal outcomes, including attendance.
- The accuracy with which leaders check the effectiveness of the school and the impact of action taken to promote improvement.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average and serves a socio-economically mixed area. All pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is in a mixed-age class with Reception children taught alongside some Year 1 pupils. The school has gained the Healthy Schools Award and Activemark. There has been some staff illness and absence in the past few years, including of the headteacher, and over half of the teachers have joined the school since the last inspection.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school is providing a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. It has strengths in pastoral areas, where good care, guidance and support enable pupils to develop well personally. The curriculum, teaching and pupils' academic achievement are satisfactory. Having achieved more successful outcomes in the past, the school has experienced a dip in effectiveness since the last inspection, due in part to the impact of some interruptions in staffing. Action taken to tackle this situation has reversed the decline, however, and the school is now improving.

All pupils are valued equally and they are known very well by the staff. All pupils receive warm support and encouragement and relationships at the school are very good. Pupils with additional needs receive further, well-targeted support that helps them participate fully in school life. As a result, pupils feel happy and secure. They behave well and are extremely friendly and sociable. They are proud of their school and are keen to make a contribution to it, for example, eagerly taking on responsibilities such as being school council representatives and playground buddies. Pupils' recent, successful actions to help the school gain a school crossing patrol have boosted their confidence and self-esteem. Attendance has improved recently and is now close to average.

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The standards attained by the pupils at the end of Year 6 are in line with the national average and their achievement during Key Stages 1 and 2 is satisfactory. However, although the school enables most pupils to reach average standards, it is not as successful at ensuring enough higher-attaining pupils reach higher levels. The quality of teaching and pupils' learning are satisfactory overall. Sometimes learning is good, when teachers are very clear about what they want pupils to learn and match the work closely to the needs of different groups of pupils within the class. However, too often, tasks lack challenge for higher-attaining pupils. Pupils receive some helpful guidance on how to improve their work, but this is not widespread enough. For example, marking often lacks specific detail on what pupils have done well and precisely what they need to do to make the work better and reach their targets. The curriculum is promoting steady progress in pupils' basic skills. Action taken since the last inspection to broaden the curriculum, for example, by promoting pupils' awareness of financial matters, is helping to make it more interesting and engaging for pupils.

The headteacher and other school leaders are committed to improving the school. Specific action has been taken to bring this about following the dip in standards in 2007, with some success as shown by the fact that standards are now rising. An extended senior leadership team has been established and its members are tackling their responsibilities with energy and a clear sense of purpose. The school is demonstrating satisfactory capacity for further improvement. Leaders and managers understand the priorities to be tackled to make the school better. These include ensuring comprehensive and rigorous systems for monitoring pupils' progress and for checking on the effectiveness of the school, which are currently under-developed.

A small proportion of the 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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress made by all groups of pupils across the school, especially higher-attaining pupils, by:
 - ensuring that work is matched closely to the needs of individuals and different groups, in all lessons,
 - giving pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work and reach their targets.
- Involve all leaders and staff in:
 - ensuring that arrangements for checking on pupils' progress across the school are comprehensive and effective
 - checking on the effectiveness of the school and taking steps to improve it.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils start Year 1 with skills and abilities that are fairly typical for five-year-olds. They make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 2 reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are broadly in line with the national average. However, fewer pupils reach the higher Level 3 than is found nationally. In 2007, standards at the end of Key Stage 2 were below average, especially in writing. Standards rose in 2008 and were broadly average, although again, fewer than average gained the higher Level 5. Current standards as seen in lessons and pupils' work are also broadly average. Recent action taken to improve standards in writing, including a specific focus on developing spelling and handwriting, has had a positive impact. Although not consistent, pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall across the school.

Pupils work hard and are keen to do well. Most pay full attention in lessons and, when tasks are particularly interesting or exciting, they participate with great enthusiasm. Some pupils are quieter and do not volunteer answers, but generally become more involved when encouraged to do so. In lessons where teaching is good

and work is well-matched to their needs, pupils progress well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities learn well when they are receiving specialised, specific support in small groups. However, not enough account of their specific needs is always taken in lessons. Similarly, higher-attaining pupils do not consistently make the progress they are capable of because they are sometimes given identical work to other pupils, or just asked to do more of the same rather than work that makes greater intellectual demands of them.

Pupils have a keen sense of responsibility, are nurtured from a young age and are kind to others. They help to sort out problems, for example, by dealing actively with any concerns posted through the ‘worry box’. Pupils are confident that any instances of bullying will be dealt with effectively, not least because of the part they play in this. Pupils are developing some understanding of other faiths, but their awareness of other cultures is not as well-developed. They have a good understanding of how to keep healthy through diet and exercise and appreciate the school’s revised lunch menu. A small number of pupils who are persistently absent have affected the attendance rate, which was below average until recently, but is now closer to the national figures.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers are encouraging towards pupils and relationships are good. Pupils respond well and are keen to please, particularly where tasks are practical and interesting. For example, in a science lesson, pupils enjoyed separating mixtures and, as a result, understood the concept well. Lessons are usually well planned. However, not enough use is made of what pupils know already when planning the next steps in their learning, which means that some pupils, particularly the more able, are not sufficiently challenged. Guidance is satisfactory,

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

but pupils are not always given information specific enough about how to improve their work.

The curriculum promotes the satisfactory acquisition of basic skills. The recent introduction of a topic approach, linking subjects such as history and geography together is increasing pupils' interest in their learning. The expertise of some external partners, such as staff from the local high school and a business mentor, is helping to improve the curriculum provided for pupils. The extra-curricular activities offered are not extensive, but are appreciated by pupils.

There is an inclusive, 'family feel' within the school and its small size helps ensure that pupils are known well by staff. Pupils are cared for well, particularly those who need additional help. The school works closely with relevant external agencies, where appropriate, to ensure their needs are met. Attendance is monitored and absence is followed up, but the school does not place enough emphasis on recognising good attendance through a reward system. The care provided for pupils is enhanced by the breakfast and after-school clubs.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The pace of development within the school has been interrupted over the past few years, because of the issues affecting staffing and, as a result, the outcomes for pupils have been adversely affected. This is recognised by the school and action is now being taken to tackle any underachievement. For example, a new system for tracking pupils' progress is being introduced at Key Stage 2, although it has not been extended to Key Stage 1. Responsibilities are being shared across the newly extended senior leadership team to good effect, although not all leaders and staff are involved enough in monitoring the impact of provision. Governors are committed to the school. The expertise of recently appointed governors is helping to strengthen the extent to which they are able to hold the school to account. The school takes satisfactory steps to safeguard its pupils and is considering ways to strengthen arrangements. The school's relationships with parents are satisfactory. In addition to general communication, some additional information is provided for parents to help them support their children, such as revision for tests in Year 6. However, the school does not seek the views of parents routinely. Partnerships with other external agencies to enhance pupils' learning and ensure their welfare are good. The school promotes equal opportunities and cohesion between groups within its own and the local community, but has yet to reach out more widely, especially in relation to different ethnic groups.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get a very positive start to their schooling due to the good quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, which has improved since the previous inspection. Relationships between adults and children are excellent and help make children quickly feel secure, settled and confident. They are looked after well. Expectations about conduct and routines are clear and reinforced encouragingly. Children thrive within a structured, supportive environment and they develop good levels of cooperation and independence. Exciting and well-focused activities are provided across all curriculum areas. Pupils’ own interests are capitalised upon and good links are made between different aspects of learning. Close attention is paid to meeting children’s individual needs. As a result, they make good gains in their learning.

Children’s skills on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage vary between individuals and from year-to-year, but are broadly in line with expectations overall. Skills levels are sometimes lower in aspects of communication and language. Children progress well and most reach the goals set for children of that age by the time they leave Reception. Higher-attaining children are enabled to achieve well and in line with their capabilities. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well. The leader promotes good teamwork and is establishing secure and effective systems for promoting effective provision and learning. The facilities have limitations, but good use is being made of them.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Most questionnaires returned by parents were positive. Some included comments such as, 'I find the staff very approachable and supportive and they show a great understanding of the children's individual needs.' A small minority raised a variety of concerns, for example, about behaviour. These issues were investigated during the inspection and the findings are commented on in the report where appropriate.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer, against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspector received 48 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 116 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	17	2	0

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:** the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
- 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.

29 April 2009



Dear Pupils

Inspection of Our lady Immaculate Catholic primary School, Wigan,
WN4 0LZ

Thank you very much for being so friendly and welcoming when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed meeting you and talking with you very much. I would now like to tell you my findings about your school.

The staff look after you and care for you well, and this helps you feel safe and happy. You know there are members of staff you can turn to if you have any worries. You get on well with each other and your behaviour is good. You make a good contribution to the life of the school when you can, such as by being school council representatives or class monitors. You know how to keep healthy.

Children in Reception make a good start in school. In Years 1 to 6, your school gives you a satisfactory standard of education, because the quality of teaching and the curriculum provided for you are satisfactory. This means you achieve as expected and the standards you reach by the end of Year 6 are in line with the national average. You are keen to do well and you work hard in lessons. You particularly enjoy practical activities and ones you can get actively involved in. Your headteacher and other leaders are working hard to make sure you are looked after well and are able to learn, and they are taking action to improve the school further for you.

There are some things I have asked the school to do to help make it better for you.

- I would like it to improve the progress you all make, especially those of you capable of doing harder work, by making sure work in lessons is matched closely to your individual needs and by giving you clear guidance on how to improve your work and reach your targets.
- I have asked that all leaders and staff are involved in checking on your progress and in checking how effectively the school is providing for you so they know what action to take to improve it.

You can help your teachers by continuing to work hard and by doing the things they suggest for improving your work. I hope you continue to enjoy school and I wish you well for the future.

With best wishes

Joan McKenna
Lead inspector

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