

# Our Ladys Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111305
<b>Local Authority</b>	Warrington
<b>Inspection number</b>	325343
<b>Inspection dates</b>	27–28 April 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Eithne Proffitt

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	203
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr P Gibbons
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Julie Johnson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 April 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Wash Lane Latchford Warrington Cheshire WA4 1JD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01925 633270
<b>Fax number</b>	01925 654584

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

Our Lady's is a smaller than average school. Most of its pupils live locally. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage, although recently the school has admitted an increasing number of pupils from Eastern Europe. These pupils, in addition to the small number of others from minority ethnic backgrounds, all require additional support with speaking and understanding English. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is around the national average. The percentage having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national figure. The school's Early Years Foundation Stage comprises Nursery and Reception classes. The school has attained a range of external awards including the Basic Skills Award, Investors in People, National Healthy Schools Award and the Activemark in recognition of its commitment to sports. In response to a need for the local Polish community to establish a firm base for children in the area, the school provides premises for the Polonia School; a centre for Polish language and culture for children from 5 to 16 years old from the local area and beyond.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and rapidly improving school that knows its strengths and weaknesses and is taking effective action to improve the latter. It takes exceptional care of its pupils. It has a real sense of community spirit that embraces staff, pupils, parents and governors. Recent, considerable changes to the school population have enhanced and enriched the cultural diversity of the school community. The calm, welcoming atmosphere and successful emphasis on pupils' personal development, underpinned by very good relationships between adults and pupils, ensures that pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Parents overwhelmingly support the school. A typical view is, 'We feel the school has laid strong foundations for our children's futures.'

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge that are generally below those expected for their age. Good provision gets learning off to a good start. As a result, children begin Year 1 with standards that are broadly in line with those expected for their age.

Achievement in Key Stages 1 and 2 is satisfactory and improving rapidly as a result of firm and effective action taken by the school's leadership to address a recent dip in standards at both key stages. Standards of reading and writing at the end of Key Stage 1 declined in 2007 and in 2008. Standards in English at the end of Key Stage 2 also fell in 2008 and progress in this subject slowed. Assessment and test data also showed that the more able pupils in both key stages failed to reach the higher than expected standards in English and mathematics. The school acted promptly and decisively to address these issues, introducing a more rigorous approach to assessment and target setting, improving teaching and tackling some underachievement. This action has had a strong and positive impact on pupils' performance. Progress has accelerated for many pupils and standards at the end of both key stages are now broadly average, although in reading and writing they could still be higher. In many lessons progress is now good, as a result of good quality teaching, but this has not yet had time to be confirmed in data that focus on achievement over longer periods. The school recognises that the standards reached by the more able pupils are not yet high enough and that these pupils still do not achieve as well as they could in English and mathematics.

Pupils contribute much to the school. They are confident, polite and well behaved. They have respect for the cultures and beliefs of others and make a telling contribution to the school community and beyond. They have a good awareness of how to follow a healthy lifestyle and how to manage risks in their lives. The school is working hard to ensure that they leave appropriately prepared for their futures. Initiatives set in place to improve pupils' progress in lessons are showing a positive impact. However, while teaching is good overall, teachers do not always pitch their teaching or activities at a level challenging enough to extend the thinking and learning of the more able pupils.

The curriculum is satisfactory but has outstanding enrichment opportunities. The school recognises that the basic curriculum does not yet promote pupils' investigative and enquiry skills as fully as it could to make learning more exciting and challenging for them. In addition, opportunities for pupils to extend their skills and develop their appetite for learning through the use of information and communication technology (ICT) are limited. All staff play their part in ensuring that good pastoral care and academic guidance are given high priority.

The continual drive for school improvement is firmly on the headteacher's agenda and, with the able support of the new leadership team, a staff that is working well together and perceptive

governance, the school is moving forward successfully. All members of the school community have taken an active role in the identification of its strengths and areas for development, resulting in a comprehensive plan for future action. The significant pace of improvement in standards, progress and provision over the last year and the successful part played in this by leaders and managers at all levels demonstrates that the school has good capacity for further improvement.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

When children first join the Nursery, their skills and understanding are typically below those expected for their age, especially in speech, language, communication and aspects of their personal and social development. However, they make good progress in their learning and development and by the end of Reception reach standards that are broadly at the expected levels for children this age. Strong, family-friendly procedures for helping children settle into school ensure that their first experience of schooling is a happy one. They readily settle into the secure routines because of good levels of care and welfare, which also result in their good personal development and enjoyment. In both Nursery and Reception, teaching strikes an appropriate balance between adult-directed and child-chosen activities. Staff have high expectations and work hard to provide engaging opportunities, both indoor and outdoor, that motivate all children, even the most reluctant learners. As a result, children have fun and do well in their learning. Planning is firmly focused on children's different needs and interests. Assessments of children's progress are securely rooted in observations and this valuable information guides the next steps for the provision. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. The manager organises transition very well and recent developments in this area ensure a seamless move into Year 1.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards in reading and writing in Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Ensure that teaching consistently challenges pupils, particularly the more able, to achieve as well as they can, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Develop pupils' investigative, enquiry and ICT skills through creative, challenging cross-curricular tasks and themes.

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.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Achievement and progress are satisfactory overall. The school's data and evidence collected in the inspection show that an increasing number of pupils are making good progress and working at levels closer to national expectations, especially in Year 6, although standards in reading and writing could still be higher. This improved rate of progress is due to the successful impact of good leadership and management on teaching and learning. Targets set for the current and future years are now realistically challenging, aspirational and firmly rooted in an accurate analysis of the school's assessment and tracking systems.

Following an initial fall in standards in 2007, targeted support for both teaching and learning was put in place and monitoring and tracking systems began to show increased levels of progress in lessons in the following school year. During this time a considerable number of children who were at the very earliest stage of learning English joined the school. Pupils' performance in test and assessments in Key Stage 1 in 2008 reflected not only these pupils' initial struggles with language but also that the more able pupils were not being sufficiently challenged in some lessons. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2008 took a tumble in English. The school failed to meet its targets in English and in the higher levels in mathematics, as too few more able pupils achieved their expected levels. Senior leaders responded speedily. A renewed culture of focused target setting and teaching, alongside additional support and intervention, are resulting in accelerated progress for current pupils. School data, lesson observations and work in pupils' books show the success of these strategies. Current Year 5 and Year 6 pupils are on track to achieve improved standards and achieve their statutory targets, although the achievement of the more able pupils is still not as good as it should be. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress as do those in the early stages of learning English as an additional language from their starting points because of the improved teaching and effective support they receive in lessons.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and are proud of their achievements. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and reflects the mission of the school. Relationships with adults and other pupils are firmly based on respect for all. Pupils clearly know the difference between right and wrong and behave well in and out of lessons. Pupils are safety conscious from an early age and understand the importance of eating healthily and exercising. They welcome opportunities to make a contribution to the work of the school through the class and school councils and the buddy system. These contribute well to the development of pupils' decision making and negotiating skills. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are warmly welcomed into the school community and the other pupils support their settling in extremely well. Pupils are developing a clearer understanding of their place in our culturally diverse society. They have a growing awareness of and contribution to the international community through the themed Global Week and established links with a village in Nigeria. The school promotes pupils' skills for the future effectively through initiatives such as Children Challenging Industry and encourages characteristics of perseverance and teamwork, although preparation for future life is hampered by the limited use made of pupils' skills in ICT. Attendance has recently risen and is just in line with the national average. The school maintains a close overview, requiring parents and pupils to explain absence and lateness at the earliest opportunity.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning has improved rapidly and is now good overall. Pupils generally make good progress in their lessons. Where teaching is really strong, secure relationships, careful planning, effective questioning and the teacher's knowledge of where pupils are at in their learning are the key features that help them to work purposefully, enjoy their activities and progress at a rapid pace. However, the focus of teaching upon raising

standards and achievement for the more able pupils is not consistent in all classes. In a small number of lessons teachers do not use assessment information sharply enough to ensure that pupils can quickly move on to take the next steps in their learning. Teaching assistants provide an effective, additional layer of teaching, especially in supporting pupils who find learning difficult or who require a more focused boost to their learning and those who are at an early stage of learning English, supporting the good progress of these pupils. Marking of pupils' written work generally provides sharp and helpful feedback. As many pupils agreed, their teachers' marking 'lets us know how well we are doing and what we need to think about next'.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum promotes pupils' basic skills satisfactorily and meets statutory requirements. The personal, social and health education programme is particularly successful in raising pupils' self-confidence and esteem. Pupils are enthusiastic about the provision for physical education and the after-school sports clubs, proudly boasting about the school's achievement of the Activemark. Curriculum enrichment activities that are provided through visiting experts and visits are outstanding and initiatives such as The Big Write and the cross-curricular themed weeks effectively promote and extend pupils' development of a wide range of skills across all subjects. However, the basic curriculum that pupils experience on a daily basis does not fully capture their enthusiasm and imagination by allowing all pupils, and especially the more able, to work through challenges independently or to direct their own learning. This results in missed opportunities to make learning more exciting, engaging and relevant. Pupils' basic skills in ICT are promoted satisfactorily but are not effectively used by teachers as a means of raising standards in all subjects.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils flourish in this school as a direct result of the good quality of care, guidance and support. Ensuring that all pupils have an equal chance to make the most of their education is at the forefront of the school's mission and is a strength of its provision. Adults know pupils well and are committed to providing high levels of care. They respond sensitively to the particular needs of those who are new to the school and to learning English. Safeguarding procedures meet current government requirements. The tracking and monitoring of their progress now allows the school to set challenging, aspirational targets. Pupils know their own targets well. They appreciate knowing where they are at in their learning and many teachers give good feedback about where pupils need to move to next. Good induction procedures help the youngest children to settle quickly into school and secure transition arrangements to the high schools ensure that pupils make a smooth transfer into the next phases of their education. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. 'The children are nurtured as individuals,' typifies the views of many parents.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

With the strong support of the recently formed leadership team, the headteacher leads the school well and has clearly set it on a path to improvement. Her energetic and determined leadership has had a positive impact on the quality of leadership and management at all levels.

This, in turn, has brought about improved teaching and promoted the good progress being made by an increasing number of pupils. The expectations of teachers and pupils have been raised and more realistically challenging targets, clearly based on tracking of pupils' progress, have been set. The school is on track to meet these targets. Senior leaders now closely monitor and evaluate the school's progress. Their accurate overview of the school's strengths and areas for development is mirrored in the most recent school improvement plan, recognising the continued need to promote the attainment of specific groups of pupils, including the more able. Leaders ensure that all pupils are equally well cared for and have equal opportunities to take part fully in the life of the school. There are good links with local community groups, schools and colleges through which pupils gain access to enriching musical experiences, sports and shared, exciting curriculum activities. Community cohesion is good. Leaders maintain the school's high profile in the local area. The school embraces the local community and, as host for the Polonia School, it reaches the extended community, forging effective and supportive links beyond the immediate area. Governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They challenge and support the school in equal measure and contribute effectively to evaluating the school's performance. Recent, good recruitment of staff has brought stability to the management structure and strengthened the teaching force. Finances are managed well. The school gives satisfactory value for money.



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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?	3
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?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

<sup>1</sup>Grade 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

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	3
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**

Inspection of Our Lady's Catholic Primary School, Warrington, WA4 1JD

On behalf of the inspection team, thank you all for the very warm welcome you gave us when we came to inspect your school. We really enjoyed meeting you and are very grateful to all of you who chatted to us – I know you are proud to be part of Our Lady's Catholic Primary School. Overall, we found your school to be satisfactory which means there are some things that your school does really well and some things it needs to improve.

These are the really good things we found about your school.

- You are very polite, friendly and obviously enjoy coming to school.
- Your behaviour is very good and you get on really well with your teachers and your friend.
- You feel safe in school and your teachers, teaching assistants and all your other helpers look after you very well.
- You try hard in all your lessons.
- You are particularly good musicians, artists, sportsmen and sportswomen!
- Your school gives you lots of activities outside the classrooms, through visits and visitors, that help you learn in a really fun and exciting way.
- Your headteacher is leading your school very well and, together with all the staff and governors, is really keen to make your school an even better place in which to learn.

We have talked to your headteacher, teachers and governors about how they can help to make your school a more exciting place to learn. They are going to:

- make sure you reach higher standards in your reading and writing
- make teaching even better so that all of you make good progress, particularly those of you who are quick learners
- make your learning more exciting, using imaginative themes and new technology that will really give it a real boost!

I know that you want the same things and you are certainly playing your part by your hard work, your good behaviour, your enjoyment of school and the way in which you respect and help one another. Well done!