

# Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic First School

## Inspection report

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	116909
<b>Local Authority</b>	Worcestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	326484
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Doris Bell

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	292
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>	Micheal Thompson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Antony Tamburro
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 July 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>	Downsell Road Webheath Redditch B97 5RR
<b>Telephone number</b>	01527 546398

<b>Age group</b>	4–9
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 November 2008
<b>Inspection number</b>	326484

**Fax number**

01527 404523

<b>Age group</b>	4–9
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This large Catholic first school has 59 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). They are taught in two Reception classes. Pupils, which include those from Catholic and non-Catholic backgrounds, come from a wide geographical area. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average, though this varies between year groups. There is pre-school provision, which is privately run on the school site. The school has many awards, including Healthy Schools and Activemark.

## 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. High levels of care and the excellent attention given to welfare contribute in great measure to pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. It creates a very effective climate for learning in which pupils feel safe and secure, and want very much to do their best.

Parents are overwhelmingly pleased with what the school does for them and their children. Several commented on how helpful and approachable staff are, and on the excellent support they give parents to help their children learn. The Family Learning project has been instrumental in this, particularly in mathematics. One comment sums up the views of many parents really well: 'My child is very happy at school and the teachers and teaching assistants are all instrumental in delivering the care and attention needed for a safe, happy and constructive learning environment.' All of this starts in the EYFS, where provision is good and children make good progress. Behaviour is excellent throughout the school. Attendance is above average, and pupils have an exceptionally well-developed understanding of how to keep safe, fit and healthy. The school's Healthy School Award is testimony to this. The school's excellent links with parents and other agencies, including a local special school, contribute greatly to pupils' learning and personal development, and to the good provision made for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Pupils achieve well because they are taught well. Standards are significantly above average overall in Year 2 and have been so for several years. They are much higher than expected for pupils of Year 4 age, including in information and communication technology (ICT), which pupils and teachers use well in all age groups to enhance learning.

A new 'buzz' has spread throughout the school following the introduction of a very well researched new approach to curricular planning in September. The links now being made between different subjects contribute greatly to pupils' outstanding enjoyment of school and cultivates in them a strong desire to learn more. Pupils report that learning has become more fun because of the new curriculum. They say they 'like school because you learn a lot' and 'school prepares you for life'. They feel the new curriculum has very much improved their learning and say 'it's fab', because they are able to pursue some of their own learning pathways within the topics they study. There are clear signs that the curriculum is providing pupils with many exciting and purposeful opportunities for writing and mathematics but it is too early to evaluate the impact of this on standards. The curriculum is similarly strong in the EYFS but here children do not have equality of access to learning out of doors.

Pupils' progress is effectively monitored through a tracking system that staff use well to ensure that all pupils make good progress. In lessons, staff regularly check pupils' knowledge and understanding and give them pointers to move their learning on. However, while teachers' written marking almost always praises pupils for their work and effort, it does not as consistently show them what they need to do to improve it. Inconsistencies are also evident in the setting of pupils' individual targets and the pupils' knowledge of them. Subject leaders are currently working on ways to gain better consistency. While good overall, some aspects of leadership and management are outstanding. Most notable are the exceptionally clear direction leaders and managers give to the school's work, and the effectiveness of the school's evaluation of its own work. These ensure that the school never ceases to try to improve. Leaders and managers have created a strong team spirit amongst staff, pupils, parents and governors. All of this gives

the school good capacity for further improvement and the capacity to become an outstanding school.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Children start school with the skills and experiences expected for their age. Good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching ensures that they make good progress. Standards are above average by the end of the Reception Year. Children develop good social skills as they work and play happily together, successfully learning how to read, write, add, subtract, solve problems and use computers. They form excellent relationships with adults. Their welfare and well-being are paramount and the school provides excellent care and support for every child. Links with parents are exceptionally strong and contribute to this. Children behave really well. They listen attentively, take turns and form excellent relationships with each other and with adults.

Leadership and management are good and systems for assessing and tracking children's progress are rigorous. Planning is excellent and children have targets that help them understand how their learning can improve, step by step. They develop independence through the good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities that have many 'magic moments', such as when they made porridge for Goldilocks and the Three Bears. Activities greatly stimulate children's curiosity and leave them wanting to find out more for themselves. This adds considerably to their enjoyment of school.

Outdoor provision has good features. However, one class has better access to it than the other. The school compensates by timetabling slots for outdoor learning for this class, and it has plans to improve the situation when finance allows.

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

- Make sure children in both Reception classes have equally good access to outdoor learning.
- Improve the consistency with which teachers' written marking shows pupils how to improve their work, and check that all pupils know and understand clearly what their targets are and how to reach them.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils achieve well in all year groups. They reach standards that are significantly above the national average in Year 2 and significantly above the standards expected for their age in Year 4, though not always in reading, writing and mathematics within a year. Standards are above those of schools in similar circumstances. Standards in writing are improving, not least because of the additional focus on writing in the new curriculum. The significant difference between boys' and girls' writing in the assessments in 2008 no longer exists as the reasons for it were specific to that year group. Pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of how to write in different styles for different audiences because their writing has purpose and they enjoy doing it.

In mathematics, more pupils are reaching the higher levels than previously. This is because they are better at recalling number facts and solving problems, and they enjoy the challenges set for them, particularly in practical activities. Mathematics also has a higher profile in the curriculum as a whole. There were several examples of pupils collecting, handling and interrogating data very competently as part of their topic work. Pupils use their ICT skills well

to help their learning in all subjects. Standards in ICT are also well above those expected for their age.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they receive good support from teachers and teaching assistants. The gap between them and other pupils is smaller than that found nationally.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils are secure and happy. Their spiritual, moral and social development is excellent and their cultural development is good. Their awareness and understanding of cultural diversity is improving with the new curriculum and its focus on global awareness.

Pupils form excellent relationships with each other and with adults, whom they trust implicitly to help them with any concerns they may have. Their behaviour is excellent. They care deeply for others and raise money for charities at home and abroad. They contribute greatly to the school and local community, including their own parish. Pupils thoroughly enjoy learning and their attendance is above average.

Keenly aware of how to keep themselves safe, they undertake their own risk assessments and have a well-developed understanding of how to keep safe when using the internet. Their excellent understanding of the importance of keeping themselves fit and healthy is demonstrated in their high attendance at sports and exercise activities, and in discussions about their understanding of healthy eating. Pupils relish the many opportunities presented to them to take responsibility, for example as school councillors and gatekeepers. All of this, plus the good progress pupils make in basic skills, means they leave this school as mature, well-rounded young people well prepared for their future. Their pride in their school was evident in the spontaneous singing of the school motto at the end of a discussion with them.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teachers create a secure, safe learning environment in which pupils feel free to discuss what they find difficult and to seek help to improve. High quality planning, based on the teachers' good knowledge of the stage reached by each pupil, helps to move pupils' learning on apace. The practice of starting topic work by finding out what pupils already know, then defining what more they are expected to learn, is exemplary.

Teachers are sensitive to factors that affect pupils' learning and do all they can to minimise them. They respond rapidly when pupils' learning falters, often using well-briefed teaching assistants effectively to help pupils succeed. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work rate and behaviour to which the pupils respond well by working hard and trying their best. Their perceptive questioning challenges pupils' thinking, as does the extensive use of computers, which successfully encourages independent learning. Within this positive picture, teachers' marking is not as helpful as it might be in giving pupils a clear understanding of how to improve their work. Exemplary practice was noted in some classes but it is not consistent throughout the school.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The first signs that the curriculum is adding to pupils' enjoyment of learning and increasing their progress are very promising indeed. The curriculum is well planned and puts learning into meaningful contexts for the pupils, while retaining a good emphasis on promoting basic skills. This greatly stimulates pupils' curiosity and fires their imagination as they undertake research and investigation to contribute to their own learning. When asked if they felt this helped them to learn better, pupils replied 'Not half'. Their current work on 'Airports' in Year 3 and 'Significant People' in Year 4, demonstrates all of this clearly. The level of discussion was very high in both year groups as pupils sought to answer a range of questions and decided what to include in their notes and fact files, and on their labelled maps.

An excellent range of very well attended enrichment activities, visits and visitors, covering all age groups, contribute greatly to pupils' learning and personal development, and to their understanding of different cultures.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Care, guidance and support systems are given high priority. Staff do everything possible to dismantle any barriers to learning and they make sure that pupils know whom to talk to if they have any worries. All of this is underpinned by the strong and caring ethos felt throughout the school. It includes excellent links with parents, all of whom are very pleased with how the school helps them and their children. The school reports a big upsurge in parental support for their children's learning following the new curriculum and the Family Learning work. Rigorous child protection and safeguarding procedures ensure that pupils work and play in a safe, secure learning environment. Academic guidance is good. Pupils receive really good verbal guidance about how to improve their work in class. They have targets for literacy and numeracy but the targets are not always in language they understand and not all pupils are clear about how they might reach their targets. This limits their ability to accelerate pupils' learning.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Senior managers set a very clear direction for the school's work through their excellent purposeful and visionary leadership to which forward-thinking subject leaders contribute well. Recent changes in staffing and governance have been handled well, ensuring that everyone understands and subscribes to the school's drive for continuous improvement. Whole-school and class targets are challenging. They are set at two levels, one based on pupils' expected progress, the other on better than expected progress. Staff respond well to this and to the guidance they receive through the rigorous checks made on teaching and learning that helps them to help the pupils reach the targets. All of this is securely linked to the robust school improvement process, which is firmly based on accurate analytical self-evaluation.

Leaders and managers have introduced the new curriculum in a manageable way, ensuring that staff, parents and pupils understand it fully. The systems incorporated into the new approach provide excellent opportunities for staff to extend the concept of challenging targets to individual pupils, and to involve pupils in the process. This does not happen consistently enough



at present. Governance is good. Governors have excellent systems and procedures for monitoring the school's work, and key governors are very closely involved in this. The school is now working hard to include as many governors as possible in these activities. The school's excellent links with other agencies and its networks at many levels make its contribution to community cohesion good.

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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?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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

<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>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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

<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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

## 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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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**

27 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic First School, Redditch, B97 5RR

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly to your school. We really enjoyed our visit, especially as we found that you enjoy school so much and were very eager to tell us all about it. You said it was 'fab' and that you had a lot of fun there. Most importantly, you told us that the school helps you to learn, and that you really enjoy the new curriculum because it makes learning real for you. We saw this as you worked on your topics about airports and significant people.

You and your parents are right when you say that you go to a good school where staff care very deeply for you and want to help you to do your best. Those in charge of the school make sure that this is the case at all times and you help them because you work very hard and your behaviour is excellent. You really do understand how to keep yourselves safe, fit and healthy, and we noted how well you care for each other, and how polite you are to everybody. All of this, along with the good progress you make in reading, writing, mathematics and ICT, make sure you have the skills that will help you in the future.

We have asked the school to do two things to make things better and to help you to learn even faster.

- Make sure that children in both Reception classes can play and learn outdoors at all times.
- Make sure that when teachers mark your work, they show you how to improve it, and that they check that you all know and understand your targets, and what you need to do to reach them.

You can help in all of this by listening to your teachers and by continuing to work hard. We hope you will continue to enjoy learning as much in the future as you do now.

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell Lead inspector