

# Our Lady and St Oswald's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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Unique Reference Number	123553
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	327937
Inspection dates	24–25 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Gerald Griffin

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.

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Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll School (total)	143
Appropriate authority Chair	The governing body Rev Philip McGovern
Headteacher	Mrs Veronica McLardie
Date of previous school inspection	23 May 2006
School address	Upper Brook Street Oswestry Shropshire SY11 2TG
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## Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited 14 lessons, and held meetings with groups of pupils, staff, the chair of governors and some parents at the school gate. He observed the school's work, and looked at assessment information, improvement plans and safeguarding procedures. In addition, the inspector received and analysed 39 parent questionnaires.

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

- The progress that children make in the different areas of learning in the Reception class.
- The progress of pupils in mathematics and science in Key Stage 2.
- The progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language and the way in which the school provides for them.
- Any differences in the progress of boys and girls.
- The effectiveness of the school's development plans in securing good or better teaching and learning.

## Information about the school

Our Lady and St Oswald's Primary is a smaller-than-average school. Four-fifths of the pupils are White British and the remainder are from a mixture of other ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average. None are at the early stages of acquiring the language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. The school's Early Years Foundation Stage provision comprises a Reception class taught jointly with some Year 1 pupils.

There is a privately run Pre School sited within the school grounds which is inspected separately.

## Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

### Main findings

Our Lady and St Oswald's Catholic Primary is a good school and it is improving. These are the key factors in its success.

- Achievement is good.
- Pupils across the school, including children in the Reception class, make good progress.
- Pupils feel very safe in school and their behaviour is outstanding. They are developing into mature young people in the school's supportive and stimulating atmosphere.
- Teaching has improved over the past two years and is good.
- The curriculum offers a good range of exciting opportunities for pupils to learn new skills and extend their experiences.
- Pupils are very well cared for and the school supports pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language very well.
- Leadership and management are good and plans to improve teaching and accelerate pupils' progress are effective.
- The headteacher's drive to improve the school further is clearly expressed and enthusiastically shared by staff.

The school has been through a difficult period during which progress slowed, particularly for pupils in Key Stage 2. Past weaknesses in teaching and in the mathematics and science curriculum, the school has addressed successfully and progress has accelerated over the past two years so that it is now good for all pupils and children. By Year 6, attainment is in line with the national average. These successes demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve further. Leaders evaluate the school's performance rigorously and they take effective action to address relative weaknesses. The school has three key areas it can improve.

- The sustaining of good progress does not always take place throughout lessons because the work teachers plan does not always match closely enough the needs of different groups of pupils so that they are fully stretched.
- The advice pupils are given as to how they can improve their work and accelerate their progress in mathematics and science is good but not of the same high quality as that they receive in English.
- Not all leaders use the data the school has on pupils' progress rigorously to

check the success of its improvement plans and to identify where they can make further gains.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sustain a good or better rate of progress throughout lessons by ensuring work consistently matches closely the needs of different groups of pupils so that they are fully stretched.
- Improve the guidance given to pupils on what they need to do to improve their work in mathematics and science to accelerate their good rate of progress in these subjects.
- Ensure leaders at all levels use progress data rigorously to check the success of improvement plans and to pinpoint areas where the school can become better.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2
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Pupils' achievement, including that of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is good. This year children entered school with skills and knowledge at the level expected for their age. Children make good progress in Reception to reach standards that are above average. Attainment varies from year to year, reflecting differences in the proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The current Year 6 started Year 3 with standards that were below average and they have made good progress to attain average standards.

The progress of girls in Key Stage 2, which was slow in the past, has now accelerated and is similar to that of the boys. This is because teachers plan work that especially appeals to girls. The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language at home also make good progress and their skills and confidence in using the language quickly develop because adults plan learning programmes that meet their needs effectively.

Progress in English, mathematics and science is good and improving. Progress is best in English, where it has been consistently good over recent years. Pupils express their views clearly in written accounts and stories through appropriate and well-chosen vocabulary. Occasionally their punctuation lacks accuracy. Pupils read fluently and understand well the meaning of text. Progress is accelerating in mathematics because pupils' problem-solving skills are rapidly improving. However their ability to draw graphs from data is a relative weakness. Improvements in pupils' practical skills and investigations have raised standards in science. Pupils' notes do not always show the accurate use of scientific vocabulary. Attainment in information and communication technology is average and improving now that pupils have better access to laptop computers in class.

Pupils feel very safe in school. Bullying is extremely rare and the school deals with any cases are quickly and effectively. Pupils take great care to keep each other safe in the playground and when moving around the school. They know precisely how to keep themselves safe, for example on the internet. They are very supportive and helpful to each other and their excellent conduct in lessons creates a very positive

learning ethos. They really enjoy all aspects of school, their lessons, educational visits and meeting their friends. This is reflected in their above-average attendance.

Pupils have a very well developed understanding of the need to maintain a healthy lifestyle. All pupils are 'buddies' and most have other responsibilities too as monitors or as members of the very effective school council. Pupils very generously collect for charity and take part in many local and church events. However, they are not yet taking responsibility to improve aspects of the local community. Average standards, very positive attitudes and effective team-working means that pupils are well prepared for secondary school and future employment. Pupils reflect very maturely on their feelings and those of others. They have a crystal clear understanding of right and wrong which underpins their outstanding behaviour. They have a good understanding of the diversity of British culture and a deep founded respect for others who have different backgrounds to themselves.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
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 <sup>1</sup>	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching is improving. Teachers make lessons interesting and relevant and as a result, pupils are keen to learn and work hard. Relationships between pupils and adults and with each other are outstanding. The many opportunities teachers provide for pupils to discuss ideas in small groups help learners develop and clarify their thoughts and this is contributing to their good progress. Teachers mostly use assessment well to plan challenging work for all groups of pupils so that they make good progress. In a few instances, progress is slow when work does not take account of the particular needs of different groups. Pupils make the best progress in English because teachers provide very clear feedback about what they need to do to make their work better. The feedback in mathematics and science, while good, is not as detailed and, because of this, pupils are not always sure how they can improve

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<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

their work. Teachers use computers and other resources well to engage pupils and extend their learning. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the learning of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for pupils who speak English as an additional language, particularly when they work with small groups.

The good curriculum supports pupils' personal development well. Good opportunities are in place for pupils to learn to play a musical instrument and to develop their artistic skills. Projects, such as silk painting, extend the skills of gifted and talented pupils well. Well-structured learning programmes help those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers. However, occasionally teachers do not stretch these groups because the work is either too hard or too easy. Popular sports, together with other clubs and educational visits including museums and places of worship, broaden pupils' horizons and raise their aspirations.

Pastoral care is outstanding. Teachers use their detailed knowledge of each child and pupils very well to provide a high standard of personal care. Pupils confidently approach a member of staff with a worry because they know their concerns will be quickly and effectively resolved. The school works very effectively with pupils and families in challenging circumstances. For example, it provides first-class support for families from Eastern Europe by employing trained adults who speak their home language. They provide valuable help and advice for these families, which contribute greatly to their children settling quickly and happily in school and to their good progress.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's good leadership has improved the school. She has built a strong team of subject leaders who are taking full responsibility for raising standards in their areas. They have been most effective in sharpening staff's skills, for example in teaching problem solving and practical investigations in mathematics. Together with senior leaders, they regularly check the work of teachers, the progress of pupils and the effectiveness of improvement plans. Most leaders use data very well to judge the school's successes and to identify areas in need of further improvement. However, this is not the consistent practice of all leaders.

The school gives positive messages that promote pupils' respect for people who have different beliefs and cultures and is effective in promoting equal opportunities. It works closely with a good number of outside agencies to support pupils' welfare and education. For example, experts have trained staff to support pupils with Asperger's syndrome and the very close ties with local secondary schools ensure that when Year

6 pupils leave, they settle quickly and confidently in their new school. Community cohesion is good. The school is very proactive in supporting local nursery classes. It has well-established links with schools in Pakistan that are broadening pupils' appreciation of life in different countries. Parents are kept well informed about school activities and pupils' progress.

The governing body works very hard on the school's behalf and provides a good level of challenge to school leaders. Checks on the suitability of adults to work with children are robust and child protection arrangements are secure and regularly updated. The school recognises that a few aspects of their risk assessments for educational visits require more detail. The school uses staff well to keep teaching groups small so that pupils get more individual help, which is contributing to pupils' good progress.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start Reception with skills and experiences at the expected level. They make good progress in the Reception class to reach standards that are above average by the time they start Year 1. Progress is best in mathematics, personal development and physical development. The well-structured induction procedures ensure children settle quickly into the routines of school. Parents agree that children are very well cared for and they appreciate the regular feedback they receive from staff about their child's progress. Children are extremely safe in the classroom and outdoor learning area. Children really enjoy school. For example, they were captivated by a lesson on the growth of tadpoles and excited to see the live animals in different stages of development. Children behave very well and are polite to each other and to adults and work with a good level of independence when an adult does not directly supervise them. They work happily with their peers, readily helping each other and sharing resources.

Writing is a relative weakness because children do not always get enough opportunity to write lists and labels during their chosen activities. The school is



aware of this and has already taken appropriate action to improve this provision. Teaching is good. Lessons are interesting and lively and challenge children well. The balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities to promote learning is appropriate. The outdoor learning area is used well but it is not resourced to the same level as the classroom to develop pupils' enquiry and gaining of independence. Leadership is good. Staff receive effective training to improve their Early Years Foundation Stage teaching skills. Improving assessment is helping staff to plan accurately children's next steps and to accelerate further their progress.

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

Parents are positive about the school. Parents are very pleased with welfare arrangements and the support their children receive. They agree that their children enjoy school and that they are very safe. Nearly all parents feel the school makes good efforts to help pupils maintain a healthy lifestyle and that it prepares them well for the future. The concerns raised by a small number of parents focused on the way the school keeps them informed about their child's progress and the help parents receive to enable them to support their child's learning. The inspector found that reports sent to parents about their child's progress carry appropriate information about standards, progress and the next steps pupils need to take and that the school provides regular workshops that offer parents the opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns. Several parents said that they had been welcomed into the Reception class to work alongside their child and that staff provided them with useful guidance about how they could help their child at home. However, not all parents spoken to were aware that this opportunity existed. Most parents have positive views about behaviour and feel that the school is well led. The inspector agrees with the positive views of parents.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Our Lady and St Oswald's 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 39 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 202 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	22	21	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 in order 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.

26 June 2009



Dear Pupils

Inspection of Our Lady and St Oswald's Primary School, Oswestry SY11 2TG

Thank you for being so polite and friendly when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed my visit and having the opportunity to talk to some of you and to see you in lessons and at play. I especially liked seeing Reception children enjoying learning about tadpoles. You are rightly proud of the school's happy atmosphere in which you all get on so well together. I think Our Lady and St Oswald's is a good school and that it is improving. Here are some of the things I found out.

- You make a good start to school in the Reception class.
- Good teaching helps you make good progress in your lessons.
- Standards are average in English, mathematics and science in Year 6.
- You really enjoy school and feel very safe and secure.
- You make every effort to be healthy and you reflect very maturely on your feelings.
- Your behaviour is outstanding and your attendance is good.
- You have very good relationships with your teachers and you work hard.
- The curriculum provides you with exciting clubs and visits, which you enjoy.
- Adults look after you very well and are always ready to help you.
- The headteacher and adults are working hard to make sure the school gets better.

I have asked the school to do three things to help you do even better in your learning.

- Make sure teachers set work that is challenging enough in lessons so that you are really stretched and make even better progress.
- Tell you precisely what you need to do in mathematics and science to improve your work.
- Use information about your progress to check how well the school is improving and to pinpoint where further improvements are required.

You can help the school by continuing to behave so well, trying your best in lessons and attending very regularly.

I wish you all success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Gerald Griffin  
Lead inspector

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