

Our Lady RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117464
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	339011
Inspection dates	14–15 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Martyn Groucutt

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P McKenna
Headteacher	Mrs C Corr
Date of previous school inspection	6 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited twelve lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at administrative, policy and other documentation. A total of 57 parental questionnaires were analysed.

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

- Standards in writing across the school.
- The quality of the teaching of mathematics across the school.
- The learning and behaviour of boys.
- The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

Our Lady Primary School is of average size and its pupils represent a wide mix of social and ethnic backgrounds. Numbers eligible for free school meals are below the national average. In recent years there has been a sizeable increase in the number of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds so they now represent nearly one third of the school population, a figure well above the national average. The numbers whose first language is not English has also seen a steady increase and is also above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is around the national average and includes one pupil with a statement of special educational needs. There are currently three children who are looked after by the local authority. The school has received the Healthy Schools Award and has recently won a £7000 grant from the National Lottery to develop a range of physical activities in lunchtime and after school clubs.

At the time of the inspection the headteacher had been in post for only five weeks and the chair of governors for three terms.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school is in the process of appointing a teacher in the Nursery. The absence of a qualified teacher in this part of the school is limiting its effectiveness.

As pupils go through the school they make satisfactory progress and their attainment is broadly average, although too few reach higher levels.

There is insufficient rigour and challenge for many pupils, particularly in writing and mathematics, so that they do not always maximise their potential

Behaviour is often good but sometimes, when there is insufficient pace and challenge in teaching, small numbers of boys become easily distracted and this has a detrimental impact on their own work and that of others.

Pupils enjoy school and make a positive contribution to their school community and to the wider community.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good, often arising from a commitment to make the school's Catholic faith a living reality.

The role of the subject coordinators within the management structure is not well developed, limiting their impact in supporting school improvement.

The work of classroom assistants is not sufficiently focused on raising academic standards.

The school has good links with parents and carers, and has established a range of very good partnerships which are effective in supporting good practice.

The immediate positive impact made by the new headteacher is widely acknowledged by pupils, teachers, governors and parents and has already led to improvements in practice.

The effectiveness of systems for self-evaluation has been inadequate in the past and the school has not updated its on-line forms for 19 months. The use of data to inform teaching so that the needs of individuals and groups have not been promoted to full effect. These issues are now being addressed by the new headteacher but currently the capacity for improvement is no better than satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- As a matter of urgency ensure the appointment of a qualified teacher in the Nursery class.
 - Improve the quality of writing across the school by:
 - utilising the skills of the local authority's literacy adviser to develop teachers'

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expertise

- carrying out a full audit of provision in writing in order to introduce effective challenge for identified groups of pupils in each class
- developing the skills of classroom assistants to better support outcomes in teaching and learning.
- Raise standards in mathematics by:
 - developing teachers' understanding of the needs of individual pupils within the class as a whole,
 - setting work that is appropriate for each identified group,
 - increasing staff awareness of the levels expected within each key stage of the National Curriculum
 - introducing a greater level of challenge for more able pupils.
- About 40% of the school whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage pupils' outcomes are a little below average. By the end of Year 2 the attainment of pupils has risen to slightly above average and remains at this level at the end of Year 6. The progress made by pupils in Year 6 last year reflected a four year pattern that has seen improvement from being significantly below to being just above average. This reflects satisfactory attainment and progress and so current overall achievement is satisfactory. What is not yet seen is any evidence of outcomes that are significantly above average which could raise achievement to good. This is because teachers are not yet sufficiently focussed on identifying the needs of individuals or groups of learners, or seeking to maximise the level of challenge that would allow all pupils to maximise their potential, especially in writing and mathematics. This is particularly the case for pupils identified as gifted and talented and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, who do not all have clear targets that are reviewed regularly and amended as necessary, so the progress of these groups is satisfactory.

Most pupils say they feel safe at school, although it was noticeable that during the infant morning break some groups of pupils, who may be seen to be potentially vulnerable, formed distinct groups and did not mix easily with the other pupils. That said, many pupils take opportunities to contribute to school life, such as by serving on the school council, and to the wider community. Behaviour is often good, particularly around the school, but some boys' behaviour in the playground is too boisterous despite the presence of supervisors. In lessons there is occasionally a degree of low level disruption, almost always caused by boys who have become bored by the lack of pace or challenge in some of the teaching. This means that girls tend to be more motivated in lessons. The school is effective in promoting a healthy lifestyle and has been able to extend this

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by the recent expansion of lunchtime and after school clubs that are, in part, the result of the successful bid for funding for a range of physical activities. The development of skills that will promote future economic well-being is satisfactory, but is handicapped by the lack of challenge in key areas of learning. Attendance is generally satisfactory and there are good systems for dealing with the small number of persistent absentees.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This is largely because the school tries to put its Catholic beliefs into daily life. For example, a recent assembly about the Fair Trade movement developed into a coffee morning for parents and members of the local community. It is also promoted by positive visual images around the school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers show good subject knowledge and form positive relationships with their pupils. A third of the lessons observed showed good teaching, while two thirds were satisfactory. None was inadequate. Lesson planning does not fully take into account the range of ability of the pupils in the class or provide activities that address the

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

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differences. As a result some pupils say that they find the work too easy, while those with special educational needs and/or disabilities sometimes find class work difficult to access. Pupils are rarely given the chance for self or peer-assessment of work, while the quality of teacher assessment varies. Often it provides praise for work completed, but offers no guidance on how it might have been better. There is little evidence that pupils have meaningful individual targets linked to the national curriculum levels and sometimes teachers are not aware of what these levels represent in terms of pupils' work. There is often a classroom assistant working alongside the teacher but they are under used in terms of helping pupils achieve their best, tending to adopt a more pastoral role. Resources for teaching and learning are adequate, including the use of modern information and communication technology such as interactive boards.

Sometimes the core curriculum, particularly in weaker areas such as writing and mathematics, fails to engage pupils sufficiently. As a result a number of boys in particular are failing to make the most use of their talents. Some good links with a range of partners, from within the local authority and with local commercial organisations for example, supports some good practice such as enterprise education. There are some good examples of cross curricular working, a very good example being a recent opportunity for Year 5 to hear at first hand from someone whose family first came to Britain from Poland in the 1930s to avoid conscription into the Soviet army and to undertake topic based work on this theme. The time given to different subjects in the curriculum is not fully balanced, and as a result insufficient time is currently devoted to physical education.

Care, guidance and support is sometimes hindered by the failure to take the needs of different groups of pupils, such as those speaking English as an additional language, or those with special educational needs and/or disabilities into full account. Links with external agencies are good in supporting pupils with statements of special educational needs, or those in the care of the local authority. General pastoral care is also good and staff show a commitment to the pupils with whom they work and the school is a welcoming place. Procedures for safeguarding are in place and the new headteacher has experience in providing training.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: 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	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The new headteacher has made an immediate start on making changes in the school

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which have widespread support. One parent wrote, 'the whole atmosphere of the school is greatly improved'. Similarly, the appointment of a new chair of governors last year has seen the governing body starting to become more effective in carrying out its role. More effective systems to monitor and track the progress of individual pupils, and to improve the quality of teaching through professional development are starting to be put into place, although it is still too early to measure the impact of these and other changes. The whole school community is supportive and are keen to raise standards. However, at the moment the roles of middle managers such as the subject coordinators are not fully developed. As a result opportunities for target setting, pupil tracking, lesson observation, opportunities to standardise marking between the year groups and other elements of good management practice are not fully embedded.

Governors take responsibility for monitoring subject areas, safeguarding and other areas. However, their ability to challenge effectively is not always apparent. For example, although standards in writing are too low the school's policy has not been reviewed since its introduction in 2005. Arrangements for safeguarding are satisfactory. Strategies to promote community cohesion, while satisfactory, are not yet fully developed and an audit of the local community and its needs has not yet been undertaken, although links are being developed. Links with parents and carers are good and being further developed through enhancements to the school web-site. Partnerships with outside agencies such as educational psychology and local health provision are good, as are links with local companies who give effective support in a variety of ways, not least in giving pupils early insights into the world of work. Links with the local parish reinforce the Catholic ethos of the school in a positive way.

The promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory, but not better because the school is not yet skilled in identifying different groups of pupils and meeting their specific needs. Similarly, while the outcomes for many pupils are satisfactory the ability to better target specific groups limits the overall effectiveness of the use of resources to provide the best value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3

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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

The Early Years Foundation Stage provides a welcoming environment where children settle quickly and enjoy attending. Although many start with knowledge, skills and understanding below those typical for their age they make satisfactory progress, although remaining slightly below by the time they enter Key Stage1. Procedures for tracking and recording are not routinely effective at the moment. For example, boys were observed spending more time on free choice activities, but this was not being logged by staff. The school is seeking to appoint a qualified and specialist teacher in the Nursery. In the interim period, the leadership and management of this part of the school has been limited. Behaviour is generally good, supported by effective behaviour management, and arrangements for safeguarding are satisfactory.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents have generally positive views of the school. They are particularly pleased with the quality of leadership and management, and several made positive comments about the immediate impact made by the new headteacher. Evidence from the inspection supports parents' views that their children enjoy school and feel safe when they are there.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Our Lady RC Primary to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 57 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 201 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	39	68	17	30	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	35	61	22	39	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	46	29	51	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	47	27	47	2	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	29	51	25	44	2	4	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	40	31	54	3	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	42	31	54	2	4	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	17	30	26	63	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	32	35	61	3	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	30	35	61	3	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	28	36	63	3	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	23	41	29	52	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	32	56	22	39	1	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



16 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Our Lady RC Primary School, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 3TF.

Thank you for the warm welcome that you gave to me and my fellow inspector Mr Wood when we visited your school recently. It is clear that you enjoy attending your school and get on very well with your teachers. We found that your school is satisfactory overall and I would like to share with you the things we thought were strengths, together with some steps we have asked the school to take to improve the quality of your education.

We know that you are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles and it is good that there is now a greater range of activities for you take part in. Most of you behave well in lessons. However, the behaviour of a small number of boys disrupts lessons and this does not help the rest of your to learn. . Mostly you make a good contribution to the life of the school and to the wider community. Links with your parents or carers and other outside partnerships helps the school to widen opportunities for learning, and sometimes for supporting those of you who receive various kinds of extra help. We were impressed by your recent assembly about Fair Trade. You think positively about things that are spiritual, moral, social or cultural and the strong links with the Catholic Church helps a lot here.

We have asked the school to do the following to make your education better:

- appoint a new leader who is also an experienced teacher to work with the youngest children to give extra help to those who already work there
- improve your skills in writing and mathematics
- ensure that those of you who find the work too easy have more challenging work so that you always produce the very best of which you are capable
- make sure that those of you who need extra help are also helped by having clear targets for success that will help you to make the best progress you can.

Your teachers are working very hard on your behalf and we were impressed by the relationships they have with you. It is important for you realise how much your success in school means to them and we hope that you respond by always doing the very best you can - and I hope the boys will always do their very best .

Yours sincerely

Martyn Groucutt

Lead inspector

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