

Our Lady of Grace RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105345
Local Authority	Bury
Inspection number	355760
Inspection dates	13–14 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Jim Kidd

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	408
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Caroline Gibb
Headteacher	Miss Pat Jones
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 16 lessons, taught by all 15 teachers. Meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body, teaching assistants, subject coordinators and the senior leadership team. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including school improvement planning, policies in relation to safeguarding, internal and local authority pupil progress data and pupils' workbooks. Inspectors also analysed 217 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 43 completed by staff and 98 returned by pupils in Key Stage 2.

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

- Whether the apparent decline in attainment in Key Stage 2, suggested by data in recent years, has been reversed.
- The level of challenge provided in lessons, particularly for the more able, in Key Stage 2.
- The extent, accuracy and impact of the school's self-evaluation.
- The quality and accuracy of assessment across the school.
- Whether outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are improving.

Information about the school

Our Lady of Grace is much larger than other schools of the same type and has been oversubscribed for the last four years. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic heritage is lower than is usually found but is rising. There are few pupils who speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average but larger than at the time of the previous inspection. Our Lady of Grace holds the Financial Management Standard, is a nationally accredited Healthy School and has been awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark on three occasions.

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

This is an improving school, which provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Parents have a high regard for what Our Lady of Grace offers their sons and daughters and they believe the school keeps them safe and secure. Indeed, the care guidance and support for each individual are outstanding and recognised as such by the pupils, who have an excellent awareness of how to keep themselves out of harms way. In their words, 'We are safe here because we look after each other and because everyone is so kind to us.'

A fall in pupils' progress and attainment in Key Stage 2 over a two-year period has now been arrested and recent test results demonstrate that standards are beginning to rise. Inspection evidence confirms this and pupils' attainment in reading, in particular, is improving apace, with more pupils reaching the higher National Curriculum Level 5 than ever before. Writing is improving too, but not at the same pace. The school recognises that in Key Stage 2, pupils' progress in English and mathematics is still not as good as it could be and that insufficient numbers of more able pupils, particularly in writing, are reaching Level 5. This is the result of inconsistency in challenge in lessons. Nonetheless, pupils' achievement is satisfactory and their attainment is broadly average. As a result of a wide variety of individual and small group tuition and very well delivered support from teaching assistants, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well and make good progress towards their targets.

Pupils are very proud of their school and their behaviour in lessons and around the building is outstanding. Older pupils acting as 'buddies' and 'prayer partners' enjoy supporting their younger counterparts and the school's work for a range of local, national and international charities is a byword in the community.

The curriculum is good and teachers are now beginning to offer pupils more opportunities to develop their writing skills in all subjects. Art, music and drama are very popular and the choir enjoys an impressive reputation. Moreover, the latest drama production of 'Alice' received well deserved acclaim from all who saw it.

School self-evaluation is largely accurate and there is a strong commitment among staff at all levels of experience and responsibility to raise standards. The governing body supports the school well but recognises that it does not always focus sharply enough on the academic progress of pupils, particularly in Key Stage 2. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Further accelerate pupils' progress and improve their attainment in Key Stage 2, particularly in writing, by:
 - ensuring that challenge in the classroom, particularly for more able pupils, is consistently high
 - sharing the good and outstanding practice in teaching already evident across all years
 - encouraging pupils to work more regularly in groups, in order that they can act as learning resources for each other
 - giving pupils more opportunities to practise and reinforce their writing skills across the curriculum
 - building on the 'cluster group' initiative already introduced into Years 3 and 4, and Years 5 and 6 in order to use data more effectively as a tool to facilitate increased pupil progress
 - ensuring that the governing body focuses more sharply on how well pupils are progressing.
- About 40% of schools 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**

Pupils generally enjoy their lessons, are engaged in the activities and are keen to learn. They show the utmost respect for their teachers and are never afraid to ask for help when they are unsure. They enjoy working in groups and supporting the progress of their peers. Opportunities for such collaborative learning, however, are not always available in every class. Over time, children enter the Nursery with the typically expected levels of skills and knowledge for their age and make satisfactory progress throughout the school to reach broadly average attainment by the end of Year 6. Pupils progress well overall in Key Stage 1 but since the previous inspection and over a three year period it has slowed in Key Stage 2, as a result of more able pupils not always reaching the National Curriculum levels of which they are capable and also because pupils' standards in writing have been disappointing. However, data from recent national tests and work produced by the current Year 6 classes demonstrate that standards are rising and that progress is beginning to accelerate.

Pupils are very proud of the school, behave exceptionally well within its environs and are courteous to visitors. Mutual respect abounds between pupils and between pupils and adults. Attendance is consistently above average. The school council takes its responsibilities seriously and has a good reputation among its constituents. Pupils have a secure understanding of what makes a balanced diet and take part in a variety of physical and sports activities both during and after school to keep themselves fit. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall but the school ethos, underpinned by the mission statement 'Work, Worship and Witness' plays a major role in

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pupils' excellent spiritual and moral development. Music is an important part of school life and the choir complements the very well delivered assemblies, in which pupils are encouraged to give of their best and to support their peers.

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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory overall and there are examples of good and outstanding teaching in both key stages. However, challenge in lessons, particularly for more able pupils, and the effective use of group work to reinforce learning are inconsistent across the school. In the best lessons, an outstanding Year 2 session on letters and sounds, for example, challenge is relentless and pupils are required to 'go the extra step' to make the maximum progress of which they are capable. As a result, they often surprise themselves at what they can do and are not afraid to make mistakes. Too often, however, challenge is not sufficient to make pupils think more deeply about the subject matter. Similarly, in a significant minority of lessons, pupils are not required to work in groups and therefore do not have the opportunities to act as an extra learning resource for each other. Teachers recognise that the sharing of good practice across the school is

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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of the essence if the quality of teaching and learning is to become more consistent. Marking is good and pupils are generally aware of their targets and of how to reach them. The school has recently introduced a 'cluster group' approach in Key Stage 2. This is in order to ensure that the wealth of data on pupils' performance is passed on effectively to the next year, so that teachers can plan their lessons with a clear focus on increasing pupil progress. This is working well but there is scope for further development of this initiative.

The curriculum has a positive impact on pupils' personal development and does much to raise their confidence and feeling of self-worth. There is a range of well supported extra-curricular activities, the most popular chess club, for example, which adds interest, enjoyment and an element of competition. Similarly, there is a variety of sports activities and pupils have an enviable reputation within the area in cross-country running. The school recognises that the curriculum has not always facilitated expected progress in writing and is now placing emphasis on pupils reinforcing their writing skills not only in literacy but also in other subjects. It is too early to see the full impact of this action.

Pastoral care is a major strength of the school and parents and carers speak in glowing terms about the outstanding support and guidance their offspring receive, for example, commenting, 'We are delighted with the holistic care and with the way the school supports and encourages our children to be individuals.' The talented team of teaching assistants provides bespoke support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable are identified both accurately and rapidly and excellent individual guidance enables them to take full advantage of what the school has to offer. Induction procedures into the Early Years Foundation Stage are of the highest order and children settle down quickly into their new surroundings. In addition, the school quite rightly prides itself on its relationships with local secondary schools and prepares its pupils very well for the next stage in their educational careers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
	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 talented headteacher, supported well by committed and proactive senior, middle and administrative leadership teams, engenders a strong sense of teamwork among all adults in the school. As result of enhanced assessment procedures and better use of data, through the Key Stage 2 'cluster' initiative for example, improvements in pupils'

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progress are there for all to see. Leaders recognise, however, that challenge in the classroom is inconsistent and, although there has been an increase in the percentage of pupils reaching Level 5, that more able pupils are still not reaching the standards of which they are capable. The governing body gives sterling support to everything the school attempts to do and, in the main, holds it to account, particularly in relation to financial management. It is effective overall, but does not have a sharp enough focus on the progress pupils are making.

Child protection and safeguarding procedures are good and fully meet requirements. The school is a harmonious community and its ethos encourages both adults and pupils to reject any form of discrimination. However, because more able pupils have not always made the progress they should, its promotion of equality of opportunity for all is satisfactory overall rather than good.

There is good and sometimes outstanding engagement with parents who comment favourably on, in their words, 'The caring and responsive staff who support our children to the utmost.' Partnerships with outside agencies are good and, in addition to French, the school is able to offer a second modern language, Spanish, as a result of its strong links with a local high school.

The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. Pupils are justifiably proud of their support for their partner school in the Gambia and of their extensive charity work. The school is now looking to develop further links with schools in the local community, which operate in different contexts.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

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

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This is a good and improving Early Years Foundation Stage, of which parents and carers speak very highly indeed. Communication between the setting and home is a major strength and one parent spoke for many with the words, 'The adults got to know my child so quickly and so well that I felt I was the only parent with a child in school.' Over time, children enter the Nursery with skills that are generally in line with age-related expectations, but recently many have been below these levels, particularly in communication, language and literacy and also personal and social development. As a result of good teaching, accurate assessment and a curriculum which is amended to meet particular needs, for children new to learning English, for example, children develop independence and broaden their awareness of the wider world. They take full advantage of the learning opportunities indoors and in the adventure playground outside. Children's progress in both Nursery and Reception is therefore good and outcomes are improving. They often take the lead in activities, for example when Reception children quite naturally extend the song about parts of the body to 'We have bones which help us to balance!'

Leadership and management are good and are based on a strong team ethos. Self-evaluation is both honest and accurate and staff know the strengths of the children and also where they may need extra support. Safeguarding procedures are of the highest order and the welfare of pupils is paramount.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
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 of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

There was a 53% return of questionnaires. Of these, the vast majority of parents and carers are entirely happy with their children's experiences at the school. Typical comments include, 'We are pleased with the commitment and dedication of the staff', and, 'There is an excellent sense of community in the school.' Almost all parents and carers express the view that their sons and daughters enjoy life at Our Lady of Grace. A very small minority of parents believes the school does not take account of their suggestions and concerns. Inspectors found no evidence during the inspection to endorse this view.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Our Lady of Grace RC Primary School 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 217 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 408 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	150	69	66	30	1	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	167	77	46	21	3	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	124	57	83	38	3	1	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	106	49	102	47	3	1	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	138	64	74	34	1	0	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	106	49	96	44	8	4	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	107	49	94	43	11	5	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)	129	59	76	35	2	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	120	55	87	40	5	2	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	110	51	84	39	9	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	84	39	109	50	14	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	111	51	88	41	7	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	135	62	76	35	3	1	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



15 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Our Lady of Grace RC Primary School, Manchester, M25 3AS

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school recently. You were very polite and we enjoyed watching you learn. We are particularly grateful to those of you who came to talk to us on Monday lunchtime and it was wonderful to hear the choir. The singing was marvellous! You were very keen to find out how the inspection was going, so I thought I would write to you and let you know.

Our Lady of Grace provides you with a satisfactory education but it is improving all the time. You are getting much better at reading but I have asked the school if they can challenge you, especially those of you who find some of the work easy, to make even more progress in writing in Key Stage 2. This is happening in some classes but the challenge is not quite as high in others. I have also asked the governors to keep a sharp eye on the progress you are making.

It is obvious to us that you are very proud of your school and that you feel really safe. Your behaviour is excellent and you enjoy looking after each other as 'buddies' and 'prayer partners.' The school council has so many ideas about how to improve the school. You told us too, that the adults who work with you look after you and are very kind. We agree! The care, guidance and support you receive are outstanding!

The headteacher and all the other staff work very hard and are always looking for ways to make your school better. I would like to help too, so I have asked them to give you more chances to work in groups so that you can help each other and use your writing skills as much as you can in all subjects. I have also mentioned that they could share with each other how well you are doing so that your new teachers each year will know exactly how to help you do even better.

Thanks again for your kindness. Please keep working hard and looking after each other.

Yours sincerely

Jim Kidd

Lead inspector

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