

Our Lady of Ransom Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115163
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	338523
Inspection dates	15–16 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Ruth Frith

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	406
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Sinclair
Headteacher	Mr J F O'Brien
Date of previous school inspection	30 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The majority of time was spent observing learning. Inspectors visited 20 lessons and observed 14 teachers. They held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation which included the school's analysis of pupils' progress, teachers' lesson plans, the school's development plan and pupils' work. In addition, the questionnaire responses of 239 parents and carers, 45 staff and 98 pupils were analysed and their comments taken into account.

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

- progress and standards with a particular focus on Key Stage 2, differences in attainment between boys and girls, and writing throughout the school
- whether pupils are clear about how they can improve their work and their learning
- the impact of the work of middle leaders and managers on the overall effectiveness of the school.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average sized primary school serving three Catholic Parishes. The very large majority of pupils are of the Catholic faith. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds with other pupils coming from a range of minority ethnic groups. A few pupils speak English as an additional language and very few of these are at the early stages of speaking English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils that have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, and for those with a statement of special educational need it is average.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school where pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning and do well. The headteacher is successful in creating a team of staff who share his vision for the school, and together they show a high level of commitment to the pupils and their families. Staff provide pupils with a wide range of opportunities and experiences which support their outstanding personal and social development. Pupils develop very good attitudes and thoroughly enjoy school. This is reflected in their high rate of attendance. Pupils' behaviour is good and this provides a very good foundation for their learning. It also helps to create a positive and harmonious atmosphere. Equality of opportunity is central to the school's work and pupils are actively encouraged to respect others through learning about a range of different beliefs, religions and lifestyles. Pupils are exceptionally well-cared for and supported.

All the positive features mentioned above help to remove any possible barriers to learning so pupils achieve well and make good progress. Attainment is improving as a result of the continuous drive by staff to improve the quality of their work. Children make a good start in Reception and this is successfully built upon in Key Stage 1. For a couple of years, pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 slowed, but due to effective action by the school this has been remedied, as seen in the pupils' current good progress. Results of the 2009 Year 6 national assessments show attainment which is significantly above average in English, mathematics and science. Staff have concentrated on improving attainment in mathematics and writing through better teaching and assessment and improvements to the curriculum. Early signs are promising. Teaching is effective because teachers' use their good subject knowledge and skills well to present work which is interesting. Consequently, learning usually moves at a good pace. Expectations are generally high, and pupils respond well to the challenges set. In a few instances, teachers do not make sure that pupils know what to aim for or how to improve their work because targets are not clear and the marking of pupils' work is insufficiently rigorous.

Senior and middle leaders and managers are developing their roles effectively, particularly in their collection and use of data on pupils' progress. This is helping to drive improvement. Strategies to promote equality of opportunity and meet the learning needs of all pupils are helping to narrow any differences in performance between groups of pupils, for example, between boys and girls. Monitoring and self-evaluation are good. The school is aware of what it does well, and there is a clear programme for improvement. A regular and accurate review of teaching, together with effective support for staff, is helping to ensure good learning and progress. Governors are very supportive of the school and effective in the way they monitor its work. Good provision and recent

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improvements, together with pupils' good progress, ensure the school has good capacity for sustained improvement. Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils are good and staff manage the school's resources well. Consequently, the school provides good value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure good or better progress continues in Key Stage 2 by firmly embedding the new developments and evaluating their effectiveness.
 - Ensure that pupils know what to aim for and how to improve their work by making sure that they are aware of their targets, and comments in their books give sufficient guidance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Observations during lessons, analysis of assessment data and a scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that pupils are making good progress and working at levels above those expected for their age. Year 6 pupils did much better in 2009 than those in 2008, particularly in mathematics and science. This was, in part, due to the provision of more practical and investigative activities and improvements in the monitoring of pupils' progress. Current attainment in English at Key Stage 2 reflects improvements in writing as pupils are presented with greater opportunities to write at length across several subjects. Due to good identification of need and effective support, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those from minority ethnic backgrounds and those speaking English as an additional language frequently achieve levels of attainment above those made nationally by similar pupils.

Pupils say they feel safe at school and this view is supported by the vast majority of parents. They have a very good understanding of issues such as bullying and say that in the unlikely event that it were to happen, it would be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately. Pupils feel listened to and know their views and ideas are taken seriously and acted upon, for example, through the school council. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities and all work together well for the benefit of the community. Exemplary practice is seen when the whole school works independently of the teachers in mixed-age 'buddy groups', reflecting on themselves and their roles and responsibilities and current issues of interest. They develop outstanding personal qualities which contribute positively to their future economic well-being. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how healthy eating and exercise impacts positively on their lives, and this is affecting what they do. Many attend additional sports activities after school or represent their school in sports events.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very effectively enhanced through a wide range of activities, the curriculum and day-to-day interaction with staff. Pupils' rights and responsibilities are displayed well around the school and are reflected in their actions and the respect they hold for others. Pupils' moral and social development and the high expectations of staff result in pupils' positive and polite

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attitudes to others. Pupils gain a very thorough understanding of their own and other cultures through the study of art and music and through links with other countries.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is very effective in ensuring that pupils are engaged in their learning and well-motivated. High quality relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves help to support the very effective climate for learning. Teachers use good subject knowledge and a range of teaching activities to meet the learning styles in each class. Questioning is used well to develop pupils' thinking, for example, in mathematics, and to assess if they have understood the key learning points at the end of the lesson. Some teachers make useful comments when marking pupils' work but sometimes pupils are unclear of their targets and how to improve their learning. The expertise of teaching assistants is used particularly effectively to support groups of pupils, particularly those who find learning difficult or need additional challenge. Staff and pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) well throughout the day to stimulate teaching and aid learning.

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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The curriculum is well organised and effective in providing learning opportunities which sustain pupils' interests and make learning fun. Staff are developing more links between subjects to make learning even more relevant. Provision for music is particularly strong and results in pupils learning to play a different instrument each year. Physical education is also a high priority. This encourages pupils to live healthy, active lives and to successfully take part in a variety of sports. There is a good range of popular clubs and activities.

Well-organised arrangements for the care of all pupils and excellent relationships contribute to pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being, and good learning. Well-targeted support for particular groups and individuals ensures pupils are able to make the best of all opportunities. The needs of vulnerable pupils are identified quickly and addressed well through careful monitoring and very effective work with a range of services. There are very good arrangements to ensure a smooth transfer into and out of school, and between the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. These outstanding levels of care are reflected in the high quality 'Leaver's Book' presented to each Year 6 pupil.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: 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 senior leadership team and other leaders and managers are well motivated and committed to bringing about improvement. Appropriate priorities have been identified and all are aware of their roles and responsibilities. They effectively monitor pupils' progress and set challenging targets based on a realistic evaluation of what individual pupils can achieve. This reflects the school's drive for improvement. Staff morale is high as shown in their questionnaire responses.

Staff help parents and carers to support their children's learning by providing them with information about teaching and the curriculum. Governors have also re-introduced an annual governors' meeting for parents. The school is highly committed to working in partnership with others. Good partnerships have been developed with local schools, and the Catholic Deanery Consortium which help to extend opportunities for pupils' learning and provide additional challenges for more capable pupils.

The school is fully aware of the groups of pupils who may be subject to discrimination, and effective support and promotion of equality of opportunity ensure that they do equally well in school. Staff have a clear understanding of the school's religious, ethnic

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and socio-economic context and is particularly effective in including pupils from all faiths, or none, so all develop a strong sense of community and belonging. Governors know the school's strengths and areas for improvement and are influential in determining its strategic direction. In response to the views of a few parents, the school is reviewing its arrangements for collection of pupils at the end of the school day. Formal procedures to protect pupils and keep them safe are good. Staff know which pupils are at risk and give priority to ensuring their welfare.

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	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 equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	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

Effective leadership and management are focused on providing interesting and worthwhile experiences, and children's learning and welfare are promoted well. The enthusiastic and supportive approach of staff ensures that children settle quickly and enjoy their learning. Children start school with skills broadly similar to those expected for their age. They achieve well and make good progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities. By the time they enter Year 1, nearly all at least reach age-related expectations across all areas of learning and many exceed these. Teaching is good. Staff take note of the children's interests and incorporate these within their lessons. They provide activities which are enjoyable and challenging but sometimes the plans are too focussed on what the children will do rather than what they are expected to learn. Pupils' achievements are recorded well in their 'Learning Journeys' and shared with parents and carers. Good opportunities are provided for children to explore and investigate both inside the classroom and outside. They enthusiastically take on the role of pirates as they create their own adventures and use an appropriate range of

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language developed from reading a story about pirates. Relationships are good and children keep themselves and others safe through their good behaviour.

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

The very large majority of parents and carers say that they are happy with their children's experiences of school and that their children enjoy their time at Our Lady of Ransom. In particular, they believe their children are kept safe, are taught well and learn to live healthily. Most parents and carers think the school is led and managed effectively but a few believe the school takes insufficient account of their suggestions and concerns. Bi-annual questionnaires are sent to parents and carers and information encourages them to contact the school if they have any concerns. Whilst a few parents and carers think the school does not deal with unacceptable behaviour satisfactorily, inspectors found behaviour to be good and staff effectively encourage pupils to behave well. A very small number of parents and carers are dissatisfied with their child's progress and the way the school meets their needs. Inspectors found that pupils make good progress, and a range of effective strategies are in place to meet pupils' needs.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Our Lady of Ransom Catholic 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 239 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 406 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	144	60	86	36	7	3	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	158	66	75	31	3	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	94	40	120	51	21	9	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	126	53	93	39	16	7	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	140	59	89	37	9	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	110	46	105	44	19	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	131	55	100	42	4	2	1	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)	103	44	106	45	11	5	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	100	42	114	48	18	8	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	109	46	88	37	29	12	8	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	89	37	104	44	27	11	7	3
The school is led and managed effectively	151	63	63	26	12	5	5	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	156	65	66	28	12	5	1	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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:	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. ■ 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.



17 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Our Lady of Ransom Catholic Primary School, SS6 9EH

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we recently visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. We agree with you and think Our Lady of Ransom Catholic Primary is a good school. Here are some of the things we found out.

You make good progress so that by the time you leave school your attainment is above that we frequently see in children of your age. Consequently, you are well prepared to continue learning at secondary school.

You thoroughly enjoy learning because teaching is good and the curriculum interesting. We were particularly impressed with those musicians who played for us.

You are kind to each other and behave well. We like the way you enjoy working with each other in lessons.

The adults look after you really well so you feel safe in school, and know who to go to if you have a problem.

You thoroughly understand what you need to do to stay fit and healthy, and this is beginning to affect what you eat and how you exercise.

You attend school regularly so you do not miss any valuable lessons. Well done!

Even in a good school such as yours, there are things which could be improved. We have spoken with the headteacher, staff and governors and they have agreed to do the following things. They will ensure that you continue to make at least good progress in Key Stage 2, and that all of you fully understand what you need to do to improve your work and learning.

We know you will all keep on working hard and hope you continue to enjoy being at your school.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Frith

Lead inspector

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