

The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122039
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	359157
Inspection dates	3–4 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Joseph Peacock

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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	349
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip Reynolds
Headteacher	Anne Walker
Date of previous school inspection	16 November 2007
School address	Kingsland Gardens Northampton NN2 7BH
Telephone number	01604 714399
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Registered childcare provision	Little Lambs – EY331116
Number of children on roll in the registered childcare provision	24
Date of last inspection of registered childcare provision	September 2006

Age group	3-11
Inspection date(s)	3–4 February 2011
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Fifteen lessons, taught by 14 teachers, were observed. The breakfast club and day care in the Little Lambs Nursery, which also provides lunchtime supervision between the morning and afternoon sessions, were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body and staff. Inspectors talked to parents, carers and children, looked at school planning, samples of pupils' work and records of their progress. They examined the school's documentation including minutes of governors' meetings, improvement planning and that relating to safeguarding and children's welfare. Questionnaire responses from staff, pupils and 181 parents and carers were analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- What are the attainment and progress of children in Reception and of different groups such as girls and boys, minority ethnic pupils and the more able?
- How well are pupils prepared for life in multicultural Britain?
- What is the quality of teaching and learning, how good are recent curriculum developments and to what extent do they have an impact on the attainment and progress of the different groups of pupils?
- How accurate are the evaluations carried out by the senior leadership team, subject leaders and governors and what are their roles in monitoring the effectiveness of all aspects of the school?
- What is the quality of the day care provision?

Information about the school

The school is much larger than typical primary schools. There has been a significant increase in the number of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds with the largest group being of Polish heritage. Many of these enter the school during Key Stage 2. They now account for four out of ten pupils. A minority speak English as an additional language. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to be entitled to free school meals are both below average. The school has gained Healthy School status and an Activemark Award. Staffing turbulence over the past two years has resulted in one third of teachers being replaced; the school currently has two temporary deputy headteachers following the retirement of the previous post holder.

Day care, managed by the governing body, is available during term time and consists of a breakfast club, pre-school nursery and lunchtime supervision. These were inspected as part of the inspection and included in this report.

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. Despite some staffing turbulence, the momentum to improve has been maintained. The headteacher has had to be a strong, effective leader to manage recent changes which have also included an increase in the proportion of minority ethnic pupils and non-catholic pupils, admitted from a wide area. Some subject leaders are new and are not yet sufficiently involved in evaluating teaching and learning as it happens in the classroom. Staff work well together and governors are effectively supporting recent developments such as modifying the curriculum, which currently is effectively meeting the needs of pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language. As a result, most pupils make good progress from their starting points by the time they are ready to leave Year 6. Writing skills are not as well developed as other areas because pupils are not provided with enough opportunities to practise their skills.

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good but the quality varies. As a result, pupils' rate of progress also varies. The most rapid progress occurs in Years 5 and 6 because teaching is usually outstanding in these classes. This boost compensates for some slower progress in the classes where teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are sometimes not high enough. In many year groups, girls' attainment is higher than that of the boys but the school is beginning to close the gap.

Most parents and carers clearly appreciate what the school is doing for their children and a large majority who responded to the inspection questionnaire had nothing but praise for the school and in particular for the pre-school Nursery. Pupils' clearly enjoy school and their outstanding behaviour is a credit to them and their parents and carers. However, some parents and carers feel strongly that their partnership with school needs to be improved. Inspection findings support these views and show that opportunities for involving parents and carers in supporting learning are satisfactory rather than good. A few parents and carers told inspectors that that they feel uncomfortable in their meetings with members of staff and that they need more information about how well their children are doing at school.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, there is a balance of strengths and areas to improve. Children in Reception make satisfactory progress rather than good because there is room for improvement in the quality of provision and the leadership and management of this key stage. Some activities planned are too easy or too difficult as the assessment of what some children can do is not always accurate.

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The headteacher and governing body have a clear ambition to bring further improvement to the school. Their self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate, and their carefully thought out development plans place them in a strong position to continue to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning in order to raise standards and close the gap in attainment between girls and boys by:
 - ensuring all those with leadership roles rigorously monitor the quality of teaching and learning in lessons
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils of different abilities can do by taking more account of their current attainment and planning challenging tasks for all
 - providing more regular opportunities for developing pupils' writing skills from Reception to Year 6
 - improving the accuracy of assessment information in Reception to identify which children need extra attention and to provide more challenging activities for all children.

- Develop the partnership with parents and carers by:
 - involving parents and carers more fully in their children's learning
 - informing parents and carers in more detail about how well their children are doing in school
 - ensuring that the school environment is more welcoming to all parents and carers and provides better opportunities to listen to their suggestions and concerns.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment on entry to the two Reception classes is broadly in line with that expected for children of this age. They make satisfactory progress and enter Year 1 with average skills. By Year 2, attainment is above average in reading, writing and mathematics with most pupils making good progress. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is average; standards are lower than in Year 2 mainly because of new pupils joining the school with lower attainment and the difficulty some of them have who speak English as an additional language. The specialist language support and individual tuition result in attainment in English and mathematics improving and the gap between how well boys are doing compared to the girls closing. Pupils of Indian heritage consistently make good progress and Polish pupils are learning English rapidly, enabling them to take a fuller part in lessons. As a result, most pupils make good progress from their starting point. An analysis of school data shows that the best progress is made by those who are in the school from Key Stage 1 to the end of Year 6.

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Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress overall. For many of these pupils, their progress is outstanding in Years 5 and 6, where the curriculum is stimulating and their specific needs are being successfully met. As a result, boys outperform girls, helping to close the gap which is evident lower down the school.

Pupils’ behaviour is outstanding in lessons and this makes a strong contribution to learning and progress in lessons. For instance, in a Year 5 lesson, pupils rose to the high expectations of staff by gathering information sensibly in order to write about adventures in the North Pole. Their learning is less rapid when teaching allows the pace to slow or when activities are not closely matched to abilities, although pupils persevere with tasks nonetheless.

Excellent conduct around the school adds significantly to the calm, friendly atmosphere where pupils say that they feel perfectly safe and are happy. None of those questioned had any concerns about being bullied and all knew precisely what to do if this occurred. Pupils develop a good understanding of responsibility, both to their school and the wider community, through their roles as school councillors and through their care and consideration for the welfare of others in the community. Common values are promoted effectively for all pupils, ensuring that they have a good understanding of their own and other faiths. Spiritual development is a major strength of the school and pupils were often seen using the school chapel to reflect or pray by themselves.

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	3
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	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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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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How effective is the provision?

The variation in the quality of teaching and learning in some classes means that pupils’ progress is not always consistently good as they move through the school. Teaching was most effective in Years 5 and 6 where, in almost all of the lessons seen, it was outstanding. As a result, pupils of all abilities often make excellent progress in their last two years in school. These teachers have high expectations of all pupils and plan interesting tasks which fully engage their pupils. In lessons, the pace, challenge and match of tasks to pupils’ ability levels are strong features, ensuring pupils’ rapid progress. Learning is not as effective for some pupils when these aspects are missing. Pupils’ work is carefully marked, and teachers make helpful comments about how the work can be improved.

There has been significant improvement in the quality of the curriculum over the past 18 months. Timetables have been adjusted to provide more time for learning basic skills in English and mathematics and all the Key Stage 2 pupils are taught these subjects in groups with pupils of similar ability. These measures, and curriculum topics of special interest to boys, are helping to maintain an improving trend in attainment. The school is continually developing and refining the curriculum to ensure pupils are provided with a more creative learning journey. Pupils enjoy the new topics, which draw on their skills in a range of subjects, and are enthusiastic about the mini-enterprise projects, such as the production and sale of numeracy information packs to parents and carers. The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of visits, visitors, extra-curricular clubs and opportunities to learn in the high quality ‘secret garden’ with its pond, woodland and wildlife. Sporting activities are a strong feature, with the school making good use of a nearby sports hall.

The school has a strong caring ethos which most parents and carers fully appreciate. There is a waiting list for the popular breakfast club which provides pupils with a healthy start to their day and a good range of activities to share and enjoy. Excellent displays around the school celebrate pupils’ work and add to the calm and welcoming learning environment. Arrangements for pupils to move from the outstanding day care Nursery to other classes and eventually to their next school are well organised. The school is taking all possible steps to improve attendance with some success. However, recently it has had to contend with closures due to the weather and an outbreak of influenza. Procedures to limit holidays during term time are not popular with some parents and carers but necessary to improve attendance further and ensure pupils do not miss essential learning.

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

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The effectiveness of care, guidance and support

2

How effective are leadership and management?

The effectiveness of leadership and management is clearly evident as the school has improved from satisfactory in the previous inspection to good. Due to the many changes in staffing, some subject leaders have only recently been appointed. All are keen to develop their role in evaluating the quality of teaching in their subjects. For the past year, their evaluation has mostly been through outcomes such as the quality of pupils’ work and their progress. Planning has also been monitored closely, trying to make teaching more uniformly effective. The impact of this work is now becoming evident.

The governing body has considerable expertise to offer. Most have a good knowledge of the school through their frequent visits to monitor the effectiveness of provision and evaluate outcomes. The steady improvement since the previous inspection reflects their effectiveness in addressing the issues identified in the previous report.

The generally satisfactory partnership with parents and carers is reflected in the diverse responses and comments in the questionnaires. These range from ‘brilliant’ to ‘unapproachable’. A wide range of external agencies are effective in supporting the care and welfare of pupils. Tackling of discrimination and equality of opportunity are good. The school has introduced effective strategies to ensure boys’ needs are being met and their attainment is improving as a result. The school’s strong focus on safeguarding is reflected in the effective procedures to keep pupils safe and make them more aware of how to keep themselves safe. At the time of the inspection, the school was meeting national requirements well. The contribution to community cohesion is good. Having evaluated each aspect carefully, detailed action plans are successfully promoting local, national and international links.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2

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

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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

The day care staff in the Little Lambs Nursery are extremely conscientious about the care and welfare of the children, including over the lunch hour, giving them an excellent start to their schooling. Parents and carers are actively encouraged to become involved through training sessions arranged especially for them and to help with activities such as tasting Chinese food. Highly effective management together with outstanding teaching and an enjoyable curriculum ensure children in the pre-school Nursery develop good relationships and positive attitudes to learning.

Children enter Reception with skills that are broadly in line with those expected. Many clearly have benefited from their time in the excellent day care Nursery as they settle quickly and have positive attitudes towards learning. Most children make satisfactory progress in Reception in all areas of learning and enter Year 1 with attainment which is typical for their age. The school’s own assessment data show that the vast majority of children are attaining above average skills from a below average starting point. This is not borne out by inspection evidence, which included a scrutiny of children’s work, particularly in writing, in Reception and Year 1.

There is a reasonable balance between adult-led activities and those chosen by children in the warm, welcoming environment. The two classrooms and shared areas provide spacious accommodation enabling a wide range of activities for children to enjoy. The outdoor learning area is also well-equipped and enables children to develop confidence as they work independently or co-operatively with others. Those for whom English is an additional language benefit from conversations with other children and the support of specialist teachers who visit school. Most children learn to speak English rapidly. However, insufficient time is being given by the small staff team to promoting children’s literacy skills, especially early writing. Some activities, such as walking on bubble-wrap, do not have clear learning intentions and lack sufficient challenge, especially for the more able. This limits the progress children make.

Most parents and carers spoken to during the inspection said that they would welcome much more information about how well their children are doing and more involvement in their children’s learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	3

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

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

There was a good response to the inspection questionnaire. It was apparent from written comments that parents' and carers' views about the school are polarised. Two-thirds of those who responded clearly hold the school in high regard but the others do not. 'Strong sense of family' and 'supportive and caring' were typical of the positive comments. Almost everyone agreed that their children enjoy school and are kept safe. The vast majority are happy with what the school provides for their children. Inspectors endorse parents' and carers' positive views. The small minority who disagreed, sometimes very strongly, were unhappy about the way unacceptable behaviour is dealt with; how much they are involved and informed; the quality of leadership and management, and particularly how their suggestions and concerns are received. Pupils told the inspectors that they had complete confidence in staff to deal with unacceptable behaviour. Pupils feel perfectly safe and know precisely what action to take if they are bullied or upset. The school is being well led and managed and is improving as a result. Inspection findings support the view that developing a better, more welcoming and constructive partnership with all parents and carers should be a priority.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Good Shepherd 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 181 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 349 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	90	50	86	48	4	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	92	51	81	45	4	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	56	31	104	57	13	7	4	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	65	36	89	49	13	7	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	77	43	92	51	6	3	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	65	36	92	51	13	7	4	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	81	45	88	49	7	4	2	1
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)	50	28	108	60	11	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	54	30	103	57	10	6	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	64	35	97	54	13	7	3	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	24	94	52	20	11	9	5
The school is led and managed effectively	59	33	92	51	10	6	12	7
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	81	45	91	50	5	3	2	1

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	36	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



7 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School, Northampton, NN2 7BH

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we inspected your school. We enjoyed talking with you and looking at your work. We found out that you go to a good school. Here is a list of some of the things we liked best.

- Your behaviour is excellent. Well done to all of you!
- You told us you feel extremely safe in school, really like your topic work and that your teachers are friendly and helpful. We could see how much you enjoyed your lessons and how hard you worked.
- At the end of Year 2, many of you are achieving above average standards in your reading, writing and mathematics.
- Adults in the school always show how much they care for you. It was good to see the help and support staff gave to those of you at the breakfast club and day care Nursery children whilst they had their lunch.
- The day care Nursery is outstanding and the staff are doing an excellent job.
- Those of you who find learning difficult or are trying to learn to speak and understand English are really well supported and this makes sure that you can do your work and feel happy and cared for in school.
- Your headteacher, staff and the governing body have worked well as a team to improve the school since the last inspection.

Every school has some things that could be improved. We found that children in the Reception classes are not making the same good progress as the rest of you because their work is sometimes not hard enough. We want subject leaders to help more to make your learning challenging. It was good to see boys getting more help and we hope it will not be long before they are doing as well as the girls. We ask all of you to keep up all the good work you are doing and concentrate even more on improving your writing. Finally, some of your parents and carers want to be involved more in your learning and be better informed about how well you are doing. We are asking staff to do all they can to help them, and make them welcome in school.

Yours sincerely
Joseph Peacock
Lead Inspector

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