

Our Lady Star of the Sea Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114281
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	378832
Inspection dates	27–28 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Linda Buller

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	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julian Hunt
Headteacher	Miss J Jones
Date of previous school inspection	07 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Nine lessons were observed, taught by four teachers. Discussions were held with staff, groups of pupils, members of the governing body, parents and carers. They observed the school's work, scrutinised pupils' books, monitoring and assessment information, the minutes of meetings, policies, safeguarding documents, behaviour records and teachers' planning and analysed questionnaires from staff, pupils and 24 parents and carers.

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

- The achievement of pupils at both key stages to determine whether teaching is consistently effective.
- How well the provision and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities enable them to make good progress.
- Whether the school's systems of self-evaluation are effective in bringing about sustained improvement.

Information about the school

The school is much smaller than the average primary school. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils are taught in four mixed-age classes. The school has gone through a period of change since the last inspection due to staffing turbulence and a move to a new school building. Following the retirement of the previous headteacher, a seconded headteacher from a nearby primary school took up post in December 2010 and leads and manages the school on a part-time basis. A new deputy headteacher took up post in September 2011. Three of the four class teachers are new to the school since the last inspection, one of whom is employed on a temporary basis covering the maternity leave of the substantive teacher. The school has achieved several awards, including Activemark Gold, Healthy Schools, International School and Respecting Children's Rights-level 1.

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 provides pupils with a satisfactory education. Under the determined and decisive leadership of the new headteacher it is overcoming a number of challenges due to staffing turbulence and is beginning to identify the right priorities in order to improve outcomes for pupils. The care provided for pupils is a particular strength of the school. Good partnerships with other professionals and the effective engagement of parents and carers, together with carefully targeted support, have resulted in the good progress made by most pupils in attendance and behaviour which are now satisfactory. Working in partnership with other local schools pupils have been helped to develop a good understanding of how they can contribute to their own good health. Pupils' good contribution to school life and beyond can be seen in the many responsibilities they readily take up, such as becoming monitors and members of the school council.

Children generally enter the school with levels of attainment below those expected for their age. Overall, outcomes for children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. However, children's progress in some aspects of their communication, language and literacy development is slower than in other areas of their learning. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils generally make satisfactory progress in response to satisfactory teaching, and leave Year 6 with average attainment. There are a number of common strengths in teaching. These include the detail of teachers' planning, which takes good account of the assessment of pupils' learning in previous lessons in order to plan a curriculum which builds systematically on pupils' knowledge and understanding. However, although satisfactory overall, curriculum planning lacks innovation. As a result, pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunity to investigate, solve problems or write at length. This is a key reason why progress in writing, mathematics and science remains satisfactory. Teachers demonstrate an accurate knowledge of the ability of each pupil in their class. Through the setting of personal targets and the marking of work, pupils are generally provided with the guidance needed to help them improve. The use of assessment information to meet the needs of all pupils when introducing new learning is less effective.

Self-evaluation is generally accurate and the school knows the broad areas of strength and those for development. Actions taken by leaders and managers to improve pupils' behaviour, attendance and the quality of provision for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are beginning to improve the rate

of pupils' progress. However, despite the shared commitment of staff and the governing body to bring about improvement, remaining weaknesses in the breadth and rigour of monitoring and evaluation activities are slowing the school's drive for improvement. Therefore, the school's capacity for further improvement is satisfactory rather than good.

Up to 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement in writing, mathematics and science by:
 - providing innovative opportunities for pupils to investigate, solve problems and write at length
 - conducting lessons at a brisk pace
 - raising teachers' expectations of the amount of work pupils are able to complete in a lesson
 - consistently using assessment information to match teaching to pupils' varying levels of ability.

- Improve the impact of leadership and management at all levels by:
 - continuing to develop a sharper focus to monitoring activities such as work analysis and the tracking of and analysis of pupils' progress
 - using the findings of monitoring activities to identify precisely where and why progress slows and to hold staff to account for the progress made in each lesson.

- Improve attainment in the development of communication, language and literacy skills for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - providing staff with further training in the delivery of lessons aimed at children's understanding of the sounds which letters make and the relationship between this and early reading and writing skills
 - improving the consistency with which staff use assessment information to match activities to children's varying levels of ability.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils say they enjoy school. This is demonstrated in their improved attendance which is now similar to the national average. Pupils generally make good, and for some, outstanding, progress in Years 5 and 6 where they benefit from teaching which is more consistently matched to their needs. This results in broadly average standards overall, despite inconsistent progress in writing, mathematics and science as pupils move through the school. In lessons and work seen during the inspection pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, made satisfactory progress. Lessons are in the main calm and orderly. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers and are keen to answer questions. However, when not under the direct supervision of an adult pupils' attitudes to work do not have the same good impact on their learning; as a consequence, tasks are not always completed by the end of the lesson.

Older pupils who act as pupil mediators are rightly proud of the part they have played in bringing about better relationships between pupils. The vast majority of pupils behave well. However, a small number of pupils report that, despite the improvements to safety brought about by the move to their new school building, the occasionally poor behaviour of a small number of pupils when in the playground continues to impact negatively on how safe they feel. Pupils have a good understanding of the positive impact of a balanced diet and an active lifestyle on their health. There is a good uptake of sports, including those offered after school. Pupils' average basic skills in literacy and numeracy, the improved respect which they show to others and their developing awareness of cultures other than their own contribute to their satisfactory preparation for their future lives.

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 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	3

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have good relationships with pupils. Pupils are well managed; praise is used effectively to encourage the development of pupils' confidence in their own ability. Independent tasks in lessons generally take good account of the varying ability of different groups of pupils. However, despite teachers' detailed planning and accurate knowledge of pupils' individual ability, new learning introduced during whole class teaching is often the same for all pupils. The pace of learning is not brisk enough and teachers' expectations of the amount of work pupils will complete are not always high enough. As a result, pupils are not consistently fully engaged in their learning. Those who are most able consolidate what they already know and those who are least able becoming passive learners; consequently, they make no better than satisfactory progress.

The satisfactory curriculum, in the main, provides continuity and progression in the development of basic skills. Subjects such as history and geography are regularly used as a focus for pupils' development of writing skills. However, this is too rarely at length and does not provide pupils with an opportunity to put their knowledge fully into practice. In mathematics and science learning is closely directed by the teacher.

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

In Key Stage 1, mathematics lessons for the most part follow a published scheme of work which entails the completion of worksheets which, although effective in developing pupils' basic numeracy skills, does not provide them with sufficient opportunities to investigate for themselves or solve problems. The opportunity for pupils to be involved in practical science investigation improves in Key Stage 2 but does not yet extend to pupils devising the investigations themselves. Enrichment activities are used well to put learning into context and to provide pupils with experiences which encourage them to learn. After-school activities such as arts and crafts and those aimed at improving pupils' information and communication technology skills are well attended and contribute to pupils' improving attainment.

The school offers effective care for pupils. Curriculum provision has begun to be adjusted well to meet the needs of those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Additional literacy support in small groups for those who are not working at the level expected for their age is beginning to accelerate progress and close the gap between the attainment of these pupils and their peers. Targeted support for those pupils whose behaviour can have a negative impact on their learning and that of others has, in the main, been successful, with lessons now only rarely interrupted to correct poor behaviour. Good guidance is provided at times of transition. Parents and carers of pupils who have recently moved to this school expressed very positive views regarding how well their children have been supported in settling into their new class and the progress they are making. The improved relationships with parents, together with an effective system of rewards, have ensured that levels of attendance have improved year on year since the last inspection.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and governing body have demonstrated through the actions recently taken that they have the necessary skills and ambition to drive the school forward. As a result of the actions taken following careful analysis of end-of-Key Stage 1 assessments, the school has successfully increased the proportion of pupils making the expected progress in Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics. Teachers new to their roles have received good support from the headteacher and the local authority to enable them to develop their skills and improve the impact that this has on outcomes for pupils. The tracking and analysis of pupils' progress as they move through the school or in lessons is less well developed. Monitoring and evaluation are not yet rigorous enough to identify precisely where or why progress slows. Consequently, pupils make satisfactory progress overall but only a small minority make good progress. The governing body is satisfactory in its effectiveness. The expertise and skills needed to monitor, evaluate and hold the school to account are recognised and beginning to be developed. Safeguarding procedures are suitably

robust, and parents and carers are happy with the way their children are kept safe at school.

The school’s contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. The school has recognised that the effective engagement of parents and carers is crucial to pupils’ quality of learning and the establishment of a cohesive community. Successful actions have been taken to bring about improved communication and good relationships in school and between home, school and the local community. The school is at an early stage of implementing its action plan to develop links in the United Kingdom and in other countries. Parents and carers are provided with good guidance as to how they can support reading at home and this contributes to the good progress which pupils make in this aspect of their learning. Good care, particularly for those whose circumstances make them most vulnerable, and sound provision for all groups of pupils across the school ensure action is taken to eliminate discrimination and provide satisfactory equality of opportunity.

These are the grades for the 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
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

Children start at the school with a very wide range of skills and abilities but, overall, they are generally at levels below those expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress from these varied starting points. Consistent classroom routines and a safe environment enable children to settle quickly into school life and to make good progress in their personal development. Planning for adult-led groups is for the most part appropriate. For example, children make good progress in number recognition because resources are of good quality and adults respond well to opportunities to follow children’s interests, adjusting planning accordingly. Children’s progress in the development of some aspects of their communication, language and literacy skills is slower than other areas of their learning. Opportunities are missed to help children to recognise the relationship between the sounds which letters make and the development of early reading and writing skills. Indoors and out children eagerly involve themselves in the range of activities which are provided for them to learn through play. They show good imagination, enjoy being active and are well motivated to learn. Occasionally, during those activities which children choose for themselves, adult intervention directs rather than supports learning. Leadership and

management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Children's welfare and safety are secure and there is effective work to involve parents and carers in their children's development. Records of children's progress are systematically taken but are not used consistently to adjust the provision to meet their wide spread of ability.

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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The number of questionnaires returned is below that normally expected. The very large majority of parents and carers who completed the questionnaire expressed happiness with their child's experience at the school. All agreed that their child is making enough progress and that teaching is good. Inspection evidence is that pupils make satisfactory progress as a result of mainly satisfactory teaching. A very small number of the parents and carers who returned questionnaires expressed concern about how well they are helped to support their children's learning and how well their children are helped to follow healthy lifestyles. Inspection evidence is that recent improvement has been made in how well parents and carers are informed and this aspect of the school's work is now good. During the inspection pupils demonstrated good levels of understanding regarding the contribution which a balanced diet and exercise make to their health.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Our Lady Star of the Sea Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided 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 inspector received 24 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 96 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	14	58	9	38	1	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	13	54	9	38	0	0	1	4
The school informs me about my child's progress	13	54	9	38	1	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	54	9	38	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	14	58	8	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	13	54	7	29	2	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	54	8	33	2	8	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)	9	38	9	38	1	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	12	50	9	38	0	0	1	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	38	9	38	0	0	1	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	46	10	42	0	0	1	4
The school is led and managed effectively	15	63	7	29	0	0	1	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	14	58	7	29	0	0	1	4

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 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 2010/11 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.



29 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Our Lady Star of the Sea Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary, Peterlee, SR8 4AB

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team on our recent visit to your school. We learned a lot from watching your lessons, talking to you and looking at your work. Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. The adults take good care of you. Your well-being is really important to them. We were pleased to hear that you know how to keep yourselves healthy and how proud you are of the contribution you are making to your school becoming a better place to learn. We could see that you wear your new school uniform with pride and that improvements are being made, including how well most of you behave and get along with each other.

It was good to see how well the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage were settling into school. They are quickly learning the school routines and making good progress in their personal development. We have asked the school to help them to make better progress in the development of their communication, language and literacy skills by helping them to understand how the letter sounds which they are learning can be used in learning to read and write.

Overall, you make satisfactory progress but some of you could go a bit faster in your work; therefore, we have asked your teachers to make sure that they always expect you to finish the work you are given. We have also asked them to make sure that the new things you are learning are just right for your ability and that you have the opportunity to solve problems and decide for yourselves how you will carry out investigations. You are beginning to do much better with your writing, but what you write is often short and does not give you the chance to apply all of the things you have learnt. To make sure you continue to improve, your teachers have been asked to give you interesting things to write about and time to complete longer pieces of work. We have also asked those staff who lead and manage the school to make sure they check how the school is doing in more detail so that they can help things get better more quickly.

You can all play your part by always doing your best even when you teacher is working with another group.

Yours sincerely

Linda Buller
Lead inspector

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