

Star of the Sea RC VA Primary

Seatonville Road, Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear, NE25 9EG

Inspection dates 26–27 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils' achievement is good. They make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics over time. Their attainment is typically above average at the end of Year 6.
- Teaching is good overall and occasionally outstanding in Year 2 and Year 6. Teachers plan lessons that are interesting through a range of activities. They make it very clear to pupils what they have to do and effectively involve them in evaluating their own progress.
- Pupils' behaviour is consistently good and sometimes exemplary, supported by their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils clearly enjoy school which is reflected in their above average attendance. They have very positive attitudes to learning and take a pride in their work.
- The headteacher, supported by governors and a very capable deputy headteacher, has maintained a focus on developing other leaders and continuing to improve the quality of teaching.
- Pupils are well cared for and looked after, including those who are disabled. Pupils know how to recognise risk and avoid danger to stay safe.
- The curriculum offers pupils many opportunities to see links between subjects. This is developed effectively through opportunities to write across a range of subjects.
- Governors contribute positively to the work of the school. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and have increased their monitoring role in school improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is good but not yet outstanding. The most able pupils are not always fully challenged to be enabled to reach the highest levels of attainment in mathematics.
- Not all teaching assistants are used effectively to ensure all pupils make the best progress.
- In some instances, teachers do not mark work in a way that gives pupils clear guidance on how to extend their learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 25 lessons or parts of lessons, of which two were joint observations with the headteacher and one with the deputy headteacher.
- In addition, inspectors heard children read in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence including: the school’s improvement plan; the school’s data relating to pupils’ progress; the work in pupils’ books; records relating to behaviour and attendance; and documentation relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors held meetings with staff, groups of pupils and members of the governing body. Inspectors also met with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with parents informally at the start of the school day and took account of the 76 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also received two letters from parents.
- Nineteen staff completed questionnaires and the responses were analysed.

Inspection team

Irene Cochrane, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Paula Thompson	Additional Inspector
Derek Sleightholme	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- There are morning and after-school clubs which are run by a private company.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in English and mathematics.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of staff changes, including a new headteacher and deputy headteacher as well as re-organisation within the school.
- The school has recently been re-accredited with the International School Award accreditation and received the Rainbows Bereavement Award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by ensuring that:
 - activities always sustain pupils' interest
 - ensuring that marking and feedback consistently help pupils to extend their learning
 - the use of teaching assistants always contributes to extending pupils' learning.
- Raise achievement and increase pupils' progress in mathematics by:
 - providing more opportunities for the most able pupils to be fully challenged to reach the higher levels of attainment.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Nursery class with skills that are broadly typical for their age, with increasingly lower starting points in their communication and language skills. Pupils make good progress across the school and leave Year 6 with standards that are often above the national average. In 2013, attainment was average in reading and mathematics and well above average in writing. The apparent weaker levels of progress in mathematics seen in the Year 6 national tests were the result of fewer pupils attaining the higher levels expected of them. Meanwhile, a key focus on improving writing led to the most able pupils achieving above average outcomes at the higher levels in writing. Leaders have swiftly addressed the variation in progress. The school tracking data, affirmed by inspection evidence, shows achievement in mathematics is improving.
- Children make good progress overall in the Early Years Foundation Stage. As a result of the strong relationships and key focus on developing children's social and personal skills, they settle quickly into classroom routines. Regular sessions to help children understand the sounds that letters make have a positive impact on their early reading skills. They confidently talk about their learning with each other and with adults. This was observed outdoors during the inspection when children readily explained that they were building a house and asked the inspector to come and look at it. Recent changes in staffing at this stage have been well managed by leaders.
- Attainment at the end of Year 2 has been well above average in reading and writing over time and showed improvement in all subjects in 2013. Although mathematics has historically been just above average, it was well above average in 2013 and in line with other subjects. An above average proportion of pupils reached the higher levels in all subjects.
- Inspection evidence shows that progress in reading is good. There is a key focus on developing early reading skills across the school which is built upon from the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teachers' innovative approaches to reading help pupils to become proficient readers and develop a real pleasure and sense of purpose for reading. For example, during inspection, Year 2 pupils were observed as they enthusiastically shared their thoughts on their favourite book written by the author Julia Donaldson with their class mates. They were equally keen to share their views with the inspector.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs generally make good progress over time because of the good teaching and support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants. It is also as a result of the effective leadership of the special educational needs co-ordinator. Progress dipped in 2013 for some pupils who narrowly missed out on expected outcomes particularly in reading. Following a review of support and extra guidance, progress is speeding up in all subjects for these pupils and attainment is on track to improve.
- In 2013, attainment for pupils who were known to be eligible for free school meals was above average in all subjects, particularly in reading and writing. They also attained a little higher than other pupils in the school in all subjects. Their rates of progress were better when compared to similar pupils nationally and also when compared to non free school meal pupils in the school.
- The school is focused on identifying any pupils at risk of falling behind and concentrates on ensuring that all pupils make good progress. Where pupils are seen at risk of falling behind, there is prompt intervention and support. This has been further strengthened by recent actions taken by all leaders. Consequently, this demonstrates the school's commitment to promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good overall with some outstanding. Teachers usually plan interesting activities and question pupils well. They encourage pupils to talk through their ideas, solve problems and work creatively together. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to evaluate their own learning and share ideas with others. As a result, pupils are motivated and cooperate well with each

other.

- Pupils have good and often exemplary attitudes to learning. Very good relationships between adults and pupils are evident across the school. Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school because they like the practical activities and opportunities to share their learning with their friends.
- Teaching generally demonstrates high expectations about how the pupils will work. Most planning caters for every pupil's needs and this helps the progress of all. Instructions are clear and well planned use of time means that pupils quickly focus on what they are learning. Skilful questioning successfully helps pupils to think about and understand their learning. However, this level of high expectations and assured and effective practice are not always evident. As a result, the pace of learning slows and its effectiveness is less secure.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well in lessons. Pupils work well together to share their learning and are keen to support others.
- The use of teaching assistants to support learning is mainly effective. In most lessons they are well prepared and use resources thoughtfully to engage pupils' interests and participation. Consequently, pupils make good progress. There are occasions when assistants take a less active role and are not directly involved in providing extra support or guidance to help pupils improve; the pace of learning slows as a result.
- Marking of pupils' books takes place regularly and is thorough with an agreed system in place. Inspectors saw examples of teachers providing helpful comments about strengths and weaknesses which the pupils appreciate. They say the feedback of this quality helps them to improve their work. However, scrutiny of books showed that this approach is not yet used consistently across the school.
- The progress of pupils in mathematics has not been as brisk as it is in reading and writing. This is because expectations have not been high enough, particularly for the most able pupils to reach the higher levels.

The behaviour and safety of pupils is good

- The behaviour of pupils in and around the school is good and sometimes exemplary. As a result, pupils move calmly around the school and play happily together in the yard. Pupils get on well with each other and show much kindness, politeness and consideration. For example, during the inspection, older pupils were observed helping younger pupils during playtime because they wanted to.
- In lessons, pupils are keen to answer questions, enthusiastic about what they are doing and generally proud of their work. As a result, pupils' attitudes to learning contribute to beliefs and a positive working climate. It is only on occasions when the pace of learning slows in some lessons so that pupils' interests wane and they are not fully engaged.
- Whilst a very small minority of parents felt that the school did not manage behaviour well enough or follow up their concerns, the overwhelming majority of parents believe it is well managed and that their children are well looked after. Those responding to school surveys and those spoken to during inspection were positive overall about pupils' behaviour.
- Pupils are very polite to adults and keen to talk about their school. They show respect towards one another and work and play well together. They have a very good understanding of what the expectations of behaviour are and comply with them. They are quick to respond to instructions and take a pride in their work.
- Records show that pupils typically behave well. There have been no exclusions from school over the past three years. Incidents of bullying or the use of racist language are extremely rare.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well through meaningful assemblies and designated areas in classrooms for pupils to reflect and share their thoughts in writing.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Adults are effective in offering sensitive care to pupils because they know them well. As a result, pupils feel safe and know who

to go to should they need help. They are aware of the different forms of bullying including cyber-bullying and racism. They say that bullying does not take place but know what action to take should it arise.

- Pupils say that they feel safe in their school. They are confident that adults take good care of them and that systems are in place to protect them from danger.
- Attendance is above average and has improved because of the actions taken by the school. In addition, this is further supported because pupils enjoy coming to school and enjoy their lessons.

The leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has good expectations for his staff and pupils. He is well supported by the deputy headteacher and governors who share the same vision for continual improvement. As a result, there is good capacity for further improvement. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses and have accurately identified further ways to improve the school.
- Leaders use a range of information to check on pupil progress and are continuing to refine the current system to access information more readily. Most middle leaders use the school's data on pupil achievement to check how effective their actions are on pupils' progress, although this is not always consistent.
- Actions taken to improve the quality of teaching have been effective through professional development, regular lesson observations and looking at pupils' work in books. Setting targets for teachers has also raised expectations of pupil achievement.
- The tracking of pupils' progress has improved and systems are in place to identify and monitor the progress of all pupil groups, involving all middle leaders.
- Funding to support the learning of those pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium has been used to purchase appropriate resources, additional support and training.
- Safeguarding meets requirements with much best practice underpinning the high quality care and support for pupils.
- The curriculum provides an interesting range of topics for pupils to study. A high priority is placed on developing the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics. The curriculum is particularly effective in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. There are exceptional opportunities for pupils to extend their awareness of others through international links and weekly reminders of the choices they can make in life that can impact positively upon others. As a result, pupils are reflective and keen to work cooperatively with their friends and to help others. Pupils are enthusiastic about the activities that happen at school, including a wide range of musical activities.
- Funding to support physical education is spent well on staff training, new equipment and additional coaching such as mini fencing, multi-sports and dodge ball. These are contributing well to pupils' physical wellbeing and development and add to their enjoyment of learning.
- The school welcomes the support and advice it receives from the local authority and its school development partner. They support the school well and have been engaged in helping the school to improve the teaching of mathematics and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Staff and the governing body have very positive links with pupils, parents and families. As a result, the vast majority are highly positive about the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body provide effective support and challenge to the school. Their skills are well utilised to support the school, for example in recruitment of staff and financial management. They know the strengths of the school and areas for further development and as a result they are able to question and hold leaders to account. They review information about pupils' progress and understand how the school is performing and how this relates to the national picture. They have improved their skills in monitoring and evaluating the school's work and consequently, are more knowledgeable about the quality of teaching and how teachers' performance is managed and linked to salary rewards. They ensure that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities for safeguarding.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	108622
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	432069

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	453
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marie Rooney
Headteacher	James Hannah
Date of previous school inspection	19 March 2009
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