

Our Lady Star of the Sea Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Thorpe Road, Horden, Peterlee, County Durham SR8 4AB

Inspection dates 10–11 February 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The executive headteacher is passionate for the pursuit of excellence for her pupils and staff. She gives an extremely clear lead to school improvement. This has led to above-expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Good leadership of teaching has secured good or better teaching across the school since the previous inspection. Pupils, therefore, are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The executive headteacher and assistant headteacher have established a culture which ensures that all pupils, regardless of their needs and abilities, are provided with the richest opportunities to shine.
- There is a strong sense of community in the school and pupils say that they are very proud of the school. They try their best because they feel safe and valued.
- The curriculum is interesting and promotes pupils' personal development and spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well.
- Children in the early years achieve well because they settle quickly and learn how to share, take turns and play with each other. Adults act as very good role models encouraging children to develop their language skills as they play.
- Governors take a keen interest in the school. They know the teachers, pupils and families well, and work hard to provide the headteacher and staff with the resources they need.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils are not afraid to make mistakes because of the school's 'can do' approach and are encouraged to have high expectations.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some middle leaders do not check to ensure that more pupils make rapid progress.
- Older pupils in Key Stage 2 do not always use their phonics skills to ensure their spelling is correct in their writing.
- The most-able pupils in mathematics and science are not challenged well enough to further develop their problem-solving skills.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by making sure that all middle leaders take more direct responsibility for improving the quality of teaching and in holding teams to account for the progress of the pupils in their subjects.
- Further improve the quality of teaching to ensure that more pupils develop their self-confidence and make rapid progress by making sure that:
 - teachers provide activities in mathematics and science that extend and challenge the most-able Key Stage 2 pupils to further develop their problem-solving skills
 - older pupils in Key Stage 2 use their phonics skills to ensure their spelling is correct in their writing.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The executive headteacher continues to provide the school with a clear vision for future improvement. She remains relentless in her efforts to offer the very best education and care to all pupils.
- Senior leaders have enabled the school to move very quickly from requiring improvement to good by effectively:
 - securing good or better teaching so that learning is effective in every class
 - deploying teaching assistants more effectively so that they contribute fully to pupils' education
 - ensuring that senior leaders can check and support the effectiveness of teaching
 - involving parents more closely in supporting their children's education.
- The executive headteacher is held in high regard by governors, the parish, staff, parents and also in the wider community. She has established strong links with St Joseph's Catholic school at Murton to share best practice between staff and provide the children with excellent opportunities to work together on educational visits.
- The school's strong Catholic ethos effectively supports pupils' personal development and well-being. Pupils of all ages have a very clear understanding of the importance of mutual care, tolerance and respect. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- Some middle leaders are less effective in driving improvements in their areas of responsibility. They are currently building and strengthening their roles to provide teachers with challenge and support to ensure that pupils continue to make rapid progress.
- Leaders ensure that the school remains outward-looking and are continually seeking to make their school even better. They have focused most recently on introducing a new system of assessing the performance of pupils in line with new national guidance. This work has been supported in close partnership with another school.
- Staff performance is regularly checked to ensure continual and appropriate improvement for each individual based on their strengths and stage of career. Any underperformance is swiftly tackled and governors ensure that only good or better teaching is rewarded. The morale of staff at the school is very high because they feel valued and have a shared vision of providing the highest standards of education and care for the children.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to support eligible pupils in their personal and academic development. As a result, gaps in performance between them and other pupils are closing. Leaders have focused on the deployment of additional staff to give high levels of one-to-one support and small-group work for pupils who are at risk of falling behind. This is highly effective because all support staff are well trained, have strong subject knowledge and recognise their contribution to achievement across the school.
- The curriculum, including in the early years, motivates learning and sustains pupils' interest well. It is supported effectively by trips, visitors to the school, creative and sporting activities. Leaders make sure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils learn about people from backgrounds and faiths different from their own, about British kings and queens and topics such as crime and punishment.
- A strength is the way in which provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision appears across the curriculum as well as many opportunities for pupils to use and apply their reading, writing and mathematics.
- The primary sports funding is used effectively to develop teachers' skills in teaching physical education lessons and helping pupils to acquire competent sports skills. The school's analysis shows that spending has a positive effect on the proportion of pupils engaging in physical activity.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors know the school well. They have a strong focus on pupils' welfare and the promotion of a caring school where children learn about key values. Their contribution has strengthened since the last inspection as a result of attending training courses.
 - Governors require, and receive, high-quality feedback from the leadership team of the performance of the school. They have high expectations for the quality of teaching and have been diligent in their appointment of high-quality teaching staff. They carry out effectively, the performance management of the executive headteacher and know how staff are helped to develop their skills.
 - Governors check the detailed information about how well the school is doing because they receive

regular updates about pupils' progress, including those eligible for support from pupil premium funding, staff performance and the views of parents.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Systems and policies to keep pupils safe are well maintained and consistently applied. Appropriate vetting systems ensure the recruitment of suitable staff and all receive appropriate training. Leaders carry out regular checks to keep pupils secure and to minimise potential risks. Strong links with parents ensure that pupils are well supported should any concerns arise.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Staff, including teaching assistants, promote positive relationships and manage behaviour extremely well. They have a range of ways to make sure that all pupils feel fully supported and valued. They expect pupils to contribute to class discussions and to respect the views of others. Staff create a 'have a go' culture where pupils are happy and feel confident.
- All staff apply the school's marking policy consistently. Consequently, pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve and ensure their mistakes in their work are not repeated. Teachers regularly add comments in their marking to challenge pupils' thinking and develop their skills further.
- Pupils' writing in many books is legible and very well presented. There is a good range of different forms of writing emanating from the exciting topic work they study, such as letters to archaeologists of the Egyptian tombs. However, some older pupils are not applying their phonics (the sounds that letters represent) skills to support correct spellings in their writing.
- Pupils are very positive about the use of information and communications technology in school. The new touchscreen computers and software to improve literacy were seen by pupils as helping them to improve their work and present it to a high standard. In Reception, children were confidently using iPads to take pictures of their 'bear hunt' to share in class and retell their experiences.
- Completing homework is seen positively by staff and pupils because it is interesting. Pupils' books show they are developing skills in researching information while applying their literacy, mathematical and creative skills well.
- In mathematics and science lessons, teachers are successfully addressing gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. However, practical tasks for the most-able older pupils are less successful in extending and challenging their mathematical and science skills through problem-solving.
- The teaching of phonics and of reading are good. Staff provide plenty of extra support for those pupils at risk of falling behind, and give pupils the right level of challenge to help them to do well. Books and stories play a major part in learning across a range of subjects and topics to kindle pupils' interests and aid their enjoyment.
- More-able pupils apply their phonics skills well when they are reading. However, sometimes when they are writing, they are given more support and guidance than they need for spelling and so their progress slows.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have a love for their school and say that they feel safe and happy at school because they like the adults who always help them and that they are listened to.
- The curriculum and daily routines support personal, social, emotional and physical well-being very well. However, in mathematics and science, older pupils have too few activities to build their self-confidence and to work independently through problem-solving.
- Pupils strive to do their best and take pride in their achievements. School assemblies celebrate their individual successes where all the pupils share in what others have achieved. Pupils regularly receive awards for the respect, manners and consideration they have shown to others which is warmly applauded by the whole school.
- Pupils are able to tell adults how they can stay safe when using the internet. Some pupils at a recent parents' event confidently brought them up to speed about what not to do on passwords for their computers.

- Breaktimes are planned well and new sports activities are helping play to be engaging and fun. Pupils say that breaks are great, with plenty to do and time to play with their friends.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Attitudes to learning are strong and, in some lessons observed, exemplary because pupils were so engaged in their mathematics challenge and persuasive writing. However, in some lessons older pupils are less willing to take responsibility for their own learning to develop their resilience and self-confidence.
- Pupils' overall attendance is good and currently above the national averages. This is because the school's leaders have strengthened links with parents and help them to understand the effect of poor attendance on their children's achievement.
- The school rules are consistently applied and understood by all. A very small number of pupils who find it difficult to behave are given a range of support, including counselling. This has proven to be very effective in helping children to understand their feelings and emotions.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- The good start children make in the early years is effectively built on as pupils move through the school. They make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 2 in 2015, the most recent attainment information shows that pupils reached above-average standards.
- The standards achieved by pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 in July 2015 were above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils successfully achieving the required level in the national phonics check at the end of Year 1 was above the national average. This represents good progress from children's starting points in Reception class.
- Pupils currently in the school make good progress. Attainment in Key Stage 2 is above the national averages. It has risen over the last two years for boys and girls because teachers provide work that motivates them to learn. Pupils do well in reading because those in danger of falling behind receive frequent help to improve. In mathematics, work in books shows that pupils are making good gains in grasping concepts. Writing becomes increasingly complex as pupils move through the school. They write at length in a range of subjects.
- In 2015, the most-able pupils were above the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Currently, the most-able pupils are making good progress in reading and writing; however, in mathematics and science they are not always getting tasks that develop their problem-solving skills and provide greater challenge.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those pupils at risk of falling behind do as well as other pupils in school in reading and better than similar groups nationally. Currently, their work in reading, writing and mathematics shows that their progress is good due to the school's determination to close the gaps between them and their peers.
- The number of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is extremely small. Consequently, it is not possible to make comparisons with national averages. However, records show very clearly that they are making good or better progress in line with other pupils. They achieve well because their needs are identified early and they receive the right level of support in lessons and when working in small groups, often with teaching assistants. They make small steps towards their academic targets and become successful learners.
- Pupils are increasingly well prepared to move on to the next stage of their education. More are reaching the standard expected of them and they are given good support to develop their social and emotional skills to deal with the changes of moving to a new school.

Early years provision

is good

- There are only a small number of Reception children at the school. As a result, they are taught in a mixed-age class alongside Year 1 pupils.
- Passionate, caring leadership of the early years makes sure that children get off to a good start in the Reception class. Arrangements are well planned for children when they start school and good links are

maintained with parents. Staff quickly identify children's specific needs and abilities and make sure that the curriculum helps them to achieve well.

- Children behave well and settle quickly. They take a keen interest in the tasks provided and are motivated to learn. Children mix with each other and share resources well. They learn to follow instructions and understand daily routines. Children listen to adults and readily contribute their ideas. Staff have high regard for children's welfare and children learn how to behave safely.
- The atmosphere in the class is warm and supportive and children have fun learning. There are rich opportunities to learn from self-chosen activities both inside and outdoors, as well as planned group sessions where adults establish the important early skills for literacy and numeracy.
- Staff make careful assessments and observations of children's learning. Children's progress is recorded frequently and tasks are designed well to address areas where children's skills are weaker. As a result, children, including disadvantaged children, are helped to catch up in reading, writing and mathematics and to develop an understanding of the world around them.
- By the end of the early years, most children progress well to reach standards which are at or close to the expected standard and are well prepared for the curriculum in Year 1. In some cases, boys' skills in reading, writing and mathematics are lower than expected, but staff are careful to ensure that these children catch up during their time in Key Stage 1.

School details

Unique reference number	114281
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10002145

This inspection 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	99
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carole Scott
Executive headteacher	Joanne Jones
Telephone number	0191 586 3895
Website	www.olsots.durham.sch.uk
Email address	P3507.admin@durhamlearning.net
Date of previous inspection	3-4 December 2013

Information about this school

- Our Lady Star of the Sea is a smaller than average-sized primary school. Pupils are taught in four mixed-age classes.
- The vast majority of pupils live in Horden village and are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below the average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is above the average. The pupil premium is extra government funding to support the education of pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils entering the school at other than usual times is higher than in most schools.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set out minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The executive headteacher is also headteacher of St Joseph's Catholic Primary school in Murton, County Durham.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in each of the four classes jointly with the senior leadership team and visited four other lessons. She observed the teaching of phonics and heard pupils read.
- The inspector spoke to pupils about their school, observed pupils' conduct around the school and looked at work in their books.
- Discussions were held with the executive headteacher and teachers with responsibility for English, mathematics, science, the early years and special educational needs. The inspector also spoke to the governing body and had a meeting with the local authority.
- The inspector had a meeting with a group of parents and took account of the school's parent questionnaire and the 10 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Questionnaire responses from seven staff were considered.
- The inspector examined a range of documents, including the school's own systems for the tracking of pupils' progress, the school improvement plan, safeguarding documentation and policies, and records of attendance.

Inspection team

Ann Muxworthy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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