

# INSPECTION REPORT

**OUR LADY, STAR OF THE SEA CATHOLIC  
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Seaforth, Bootle

LEA area: Sefton

Unique reference number: 104929

Headteacher: Mr P Gretton

Reporting inspector: Mr R Fry  
21073

Dates of inspection: 3 – 4 December 2001

Inspection number: 243200

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## GLOSSARY

Foundation Stage – (young children up to the age of 5+ in the nursery and reception class)  
The curriculum includes the 'Areas of Learning' - language development, mathematical understanding, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative, physical and social development.

Key Stage 1 – Years 1 and 2.

Key Stage 2 – Years 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Curriculum – everything the school teaches pupils in and out of class, such as English, science and health education, visits and visitors.

Schemes of work – courses of lessons in e.g. English, for teachers to use when planning lessons.

ICT – information and communication technology.

Baseline assessment – tests for young children when they join the school or in their first year.

Co-ordinator – teacher in charge of organising a subject, such as English or physical education.

School development (or improvement) plan – set of plans that shows how the school will improve over the coming year or longer, what its priorities for action are and how it will spend its money.

National averages – refer to National Curriculum test results and teachers' assessments in English, mathematics and science where there are national comparisons with all schools and similar schools.

National expectations – most pupils are expected to reach Level 2 in all National Curriculum subjects at the age of seven years and Level 4 at the age of eleven.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 3 – 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Kepler Street  
Seaforth  
Liverpool

Postcode: L21 3TR

Telephone number: 0151 928 3158

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr W Duffy

Date of previous inspection: 8 September 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Our Lady, Star of the Sea Catholic Primary is an average sized school for boys and girls aged between three and eleven years. It has been identified as a 'Beacon' school because of the quality of its work. The school educates pupils from Seaforth and the surrounding area. It has 190 pupils on roll, including 18 young children who attend the nursery part-time. The number of pupils in the school has declined slightly over the last four years, in keeping with other schools in the area. Children's attainment on entry to the school is very low. Fifty-six per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is a very high proportion. Thirty-nine per cent of pupils have special educational needs, which is well above average. Some pupils, for example, need extra help with speaking and writing skills. Three pupils have Caribbean backgrounds. No pupils have English as an additional language and all speak English. The Catholic Church will inspect religious education, acts of collective worship and pupils' spiritual development later in the year.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Our Lady, Star of the Sea Catholic Primary is an excellent school. It makes very good provision for all pupils, including excellent provision for those with special educational needs. Pupils make very good progress. By the time they leave the school, standards of pupils' work are better than in most similar schools. The teaching is very good and the work that pupils are set is challenging. All adults work very well together and seek to improve the standards of pupils' work. The school promotes the inclusion of pupils in all that it does very effectively. Although the cost of educating pupils is above average, the school provides very good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Pupils make very good progress from the time they enter the nursery until they leave. Year 6 pupils' progress in mathematics last year was exceptional.
- The teaching and learning are very good. The provision in the Foundation Stage and for pupils with special educational needs is a further strength.
- Pupils are very well behaved and work hard.
- The school makes a major contribution to the work of other schools and the local community.
- The management and leadership of the school are very good. The headteacher provides very strong leadership.
- Pupils' moral and social education is very good and the school takes very good care of all pupils.
- Parents have a very high opinion of the school.

#### **What could be improved**

- There are no major issues that the school needs to address.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.*

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in 1997. Since then, the school has made very good improvements. Two key issues were identified. One issue concerned pupils' standards of speech. The second was about the need for a manageable assessment system and teachers' use of these records of pupils' progress to help them plan lessons. Pupils' speaking skills have improved and they are close to those expected nationally. The school has improved its assessment procedures and the information about what pupils know, understand and can do is used very well. The school now sets targets for pupils to attain in English and mathematics.

There have been many other improvements. The teaching and pupils' attainment have improved. The school has become a Beacon school because of the high standards that pupils attain within the social context of the area. The school has grasped all new initiatives, such as the National Literacy Strategy

and National Numeracy Strategy and has managed them very well. Pupils' cultural development is better. For example, pupils now learn more about how other people live and about what they believe.

## STANDARDS

*The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.*

Performance in:	The school (OLSS) compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	C	D	C	A
mathematics	A	B	A	A*
science	D	B	A	A

Key	
very high (in the top 5%)	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

In National Curriculum tests in 2001, Year 6 pupils' standards of work in mathematics and science were well above average compared with all schools nationally. In English, they were average. In comparison with similar schools, pupils' results were very high in mathematics and were well above average in English and science. Pupils reached their targets. In 2000, results were above average in mathematics and science and below average in English. Last year's results (summer 2001) were better than those in 2000. Pupils' performances have improved in the last three years. The standards of work of eleven year olds observed during the inspection were in line with those expected nationally in English, mathematics and science. In all three subjects, pupils were found to be making very good progress.

Five years olds attain standards well below those of children nationally but make very good progress in the 'Areas of Learning' they study. Young children soon become confident and learn many important skills, such as how to work together with others and settle to tasks. The 'Start Right' group within the Sefton 'FAST' project gives very young children and their parents a very good opportunity to work together on early learning activities each week before children enter the nursery.

English results in Year 2 over the last four years have varied between well below average and average in comparison with all schools nationally. At the end of Year 2 in 2001, pupils' National Curriculum test results were above average in reading and average in writing and mathematics in comparison with similar schools. Each year, the school identifies aspects of English that need improvement, such as raising standards of pupils' speaking and writing in the infant years. Pupils' speaking standards have improved. The results of the very good teaching of basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics are seen later in the junior years. During the inspection, Year 2 pupils' standards of work observed were a little below national averages in English and mathematics. Pupils made very good progress in the lessons observed.

Pupils achieve very well. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and the quality of teaching ensures that pupils make very good progress from the time they enter the school until they leave it. Across the school, the teaching has been sharply focussed on what pupils need to learn. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve very well and they attain their targets.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils show a keen interest in school life and enjoy going to school. They enjoy special events and extra-curricular clubs. Most pupils listen attentively to teachers and each other during lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Most pupils behave very well in lessons and at playtimes. Pupils work well together on shared activities. Movement around the school is also good.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The school's emphasis on developing pupils' social skills has been very successful. Pupils have responded very well to the opportunities that the school gives them to take responsibility for their work.
Attendance	Well below average, but there has been a small but steady improvement. The school has taken many positive steps to boost pupils' attendance.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	Very good

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

Teachers' close attention to young children's individual needs in the foundation unit and reception classes is very good and children make a very good start to their education. Activities are varied and well planned. Teachers take full account of children's emotional and social needs and provide, for example, role-play opportunities in the nursery 'post-office.' Teachers in Years 1 and 2 continue the very good start made in the Foundation Stage.

The good organisation and challenging work set in literacy and numeracy lessons have led to pupils' very good progress and very good results in Year 6. Across the school, English (reading, writing, listening and speaking) and mathematics (numeracy) are very effectively taught. Teachers reinforce ideas effectively and repeat key points of lessons regularly so that pupils learn at a good pace. Teachers are very clear about what it is that pupils will learn in each lesson and they check that it has indeed been learned. Work is particularly well matched to the needs of small groups of pupils in each class because the results of assessments are used immediately to plan the next day's set of group activities. The quality of daily lesson planning is therefore high. However on a few occasions, the pace of work is too great, older lower attainers do not have enough time to complete their work in mathematics, and some work is untidy.

There is a purposeful atmosphere in classrooms. Teachers question pupils very well and use this method to revise knowledge from previous lessons, to cause pupils to think and learn new ideas and to check understanding. Teachers have a wide spread of knowledge and skills that they use to very good effect. Pupils, for example, discussed their feelings about a Dylan Thomas poem with their teacher and learned from each other's ideas. Pupils' capacity to learn is extended effectively and the needs of all pupils are met in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs learn very well because teachers and support staff meet their needs quickly and effectively.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL



Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The school gives high priority to teaching the basic skills of literacy, speaking and listening and numeracy. The school has excellent links with partner schools and the local community. The Foundation Stage curriculum meets the needs of young children very effectively.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Excellent. The provision is very well managed. Pupils make very good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. Support staff help pupils very effectively in lessons and in small group work. Pupils with statements of their special educational needs are very well integrated into all lessons, including physical education.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. All pupils have the opportunity to take part in everything that the school does. There are many clubs, teams and residential visits for pupils to join, which they enjoy. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to sing and perform in public. The social and moral tone of acts of collective worship is very strong.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Procedures for improving pupils' behaviour are unobtrusive and very good. The school has worked hard to improve attendance. Information about pupils' progress is used extremely effectively to guide teachers' planning.

The school has an excellent partnership with parents.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. The deputy headteacher has a very positive influence on the school's work, such as the provision for pupils with special educational needs. Staff with responsibilities are very effective in their work. The administration of the school is very efficient.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The chair is an excellent 'critical friend' to the school. Many governors take an active role in helping to manage the school. They understand its strengths and what still needs to be done. The staffing committee, for example, successfully appoints good staff. Some required areas in the annual report for parents are not included.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. The school development plan is used to check progress towards targets very well. The school uses the results of its checks on teaching and learning extremely effectively. For example, pupils receive intensive extra help when they need it and support staff are used most successfully in this role.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school has made very good use of the money available to it and 'best value' is found for many major purchases. The small under-spend is kept in reserve to ensure that the school's good provision is maintained. The school is very good at raising funds for important projects. The school has bought a laptop computer for each teacher to use, which has helped teachers to plan lessons. The Beacon school grant is used very effectively.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Twenty five per cent of questionnaires were returned and 21 parents attended the meeting

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children like going to school very much and make good progress with their work.</li> <li>• Behaviour is good.</li> <li>• The right amount of homework is set for children of different ages.</li> <li>• The teaching is good and parents are kept well informed of their children's progress.</li> <li>• The school works closely with parents and they feel comfortable when approaching the school with a question or problem.</li> <li>• The school has high expectations of children and it helps them to mature and be responsible.</li> <li>• The school is very well managed and led.</li> <li>• There is a good range of extra-curricular activities.</li> </ul>	<p>All parents who responded are very pleased with what the school offers.</p>

The inspection team agrees with parents' very positive views.

### **OTHER INFORMATION**

The governing body is responsible for drawing up an action plan within 40 days of receiving the inspection report, showing how the school will tackle the improvements needed. This action plan will be circulated to all parents at the school.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

**Pupils make very good progress from the time they enter the nursery until they leave. Year 6 pupils' progress in mathematics last year was exceptional.**

1. There are many reasons why pupils' standards of work and achievement have improved since the last inspection. When the headteacher joined the school several years ago, he set out to improve standards. The very good management of the school in that time and teachers' dedication are important factors in the success of the school. The school has carefully identified its areas of relative weakness over the years and has set out to improve them. Adults work closely together and there is a high level of consistency throughout the school. The headteacher and senior staff make checks on the quality of teaching, which has been a significant factor in improving the quality of lessons. Teachers plan lessons on a daily basis and identify areas that pupils need to revise the next day very thoroughly.
2. Another factor is that the school has raised much money for good quality resources for pupils to use. A particularly good example is in information and communication technology. (ICT) All classes have good quality computers to use at all times during the school day and there is a very good new computer suite. Teachers display pupils' work and important information clearly. Lessons are planned so that all pupils have work that challenges them. Teachers provide interesting and well written work sheets and other information for pupils to use. Pupils are always clear what they have to do and how long they have to do it. They receive rewards when a job is well done. Consequently, pupils have a sense of pride in their work.
3. Pupils achieve very well. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and the very good quality of teaching ensures that pupils make very good progress from the time they enter the school until they leave it. Parents are pleased with the progress their children make and in the interest they have in lessons. The school has identified the need for a further improvement in writing standards this year. Teachers identify targets within English every year because English is the subject that has needed the most work to improve pupils' standards. Teachers effectively set challenging tasks for all pupils to complete and standards have risen consequently.
4. Five years olds attain standards well below those of children nationally but make very good progress in the 'Areas of Learning' they study. The teaching in the nursery and reception classes has had a very positive effect on young children's standards of work. Young children soon become confident and learn many important skills, such as how to work together with others, settle to tasks, recognise letters and count. The 'Start Right' group within the Sefton 'FAST' project gives very young children and their parents a very good opportunity to work together. For example, they share books and toys each week and very young children learn about what happens at school before they enter the nursery.
5. English results in Year 2 over the last four years have varied between well below average and average in comparison with all schools nationally. This pattern is explained by variations from year to year in pupils' capacity to learn and is not a reflection on the teaching. Often, the results of the very good teaching of basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics are seen later in the junior years. Teachers in the infant years plan very carefully, and include accurate targets for pupils to attain by the end of each lesson. This factor has a major influence on the success of lessons. During the inspection, pupils were observed following events in a story in Year 2. The group observed knew the sounds of many letters and although they read slowly, they

were sure of the meaning of what they were reading. Work observed was in line with the standards expected for children of this age.

6. Teachers use a range of very good teaching tactics. For example, lessons are very well planned so that pupils revise their previous knowledge and only then start to learn new ideas and knowledge. The school uses the funds for 'booster' classes very effectively. Pupils who are on the borderline between particular levels of the National Curriculum receive extra attention. The school uses very small group work very effectively. For example, some pupils in Years 3 and 4 receive extra help with reading and writing, which is continued in Year 5. The success of these processes is evident in the school's results and in the sense pupils have of feeling included and of being important and valued.
7. Achievement in Year 6 last year was very good overall and exceptional in mathematics. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils showed that they knew how to make quite complex mental calculations. Later for example, higher attainers calculated how much each flowerpot costs when 10 cost £12.60. Average attainers worked out successfully 35 lots of 56 pence and lower attainers calculated change from £20. During an English lesson in Year 5, pupils of all abilities gave clear and well explained opinions about the poems they heard. Pupils used complex sentences and gave reasons for their views. Higher attainers went on to compare the qualities of two poems and write another verse. Other pupils in the lesson observed found the adverbs in a poem and they identified aspects of the main character's personality successfully.
8. The teaching has been clearly focused on what pupils need to learn day by day. Pupils reach their high targets because teachers across the school provide a curriculum that very largely meets pupils' needs at the correct speed. The Year 6 teacher has a particularly good knowledge of mathematics and a very positive manner with pupils during lessons. Pupils' attainment has benefited from his approach.
9. Pupils with special educational needs across the school achieve very well. They attain the targets in their individual education plans because of the high quality of the individual education plans and the very good teaching they receive. The school responds very quickly to their needs and teachers set targets that are often based on something that pupils did not understand the day before. Pupils' targets are short-term and pupils' progress is measured easily and accurately. Pupils, for example, have targets that refer to learning particular letter sounds or types of words over periods of a few weeks.

### **The teaching and learning are very good.**

10. Over the past four years, there has been much very good teaching, which has been reflected in pupils' standards of work and their very good achievement. Many examples of very good and excellent teaching were observed during the two days of the inspection. There are many reasons why the teaching is very successful. Teachers share common goals and discuss ideas together constructively. The teaching is monitored effectively and the management of the school gives clear direction about how the curriculum should be taught. An essential feature of the successful teaching is the organisation of the curriculum. Each year teachers set targets for groups of pupils and then organise the speed that the curriculum is taught so that the targets are reached. Since the last inspection teachers have worked hard to improve their skills further, for example, to support their work in literacy and numeracy lessons.

11. There is a purposeful atmosphere in classrooms. Teachers reinforce ideas effectively and repeat key points of lessons regularly and pupils learn at a good pace. Teachers are very clear about what it is that pupils will learn in each lesson, but some teachers record this information more clearly than others in their plans. All teachers check that the intended learning has happened. Work is nearly always well matched to the needs of small groups of pupils in each class because the results of assessments are used immediately to plan the next day's set of group activities. Pupils almost immediately revisit what they have not understood, which gives them a much better chance of grasping new knowledge. The quality of daily lesson planning is high because there is close attention to what pupils need to know next and whether all pupils understood what was taught yesterday.
12. Teachers question pupils very well and use this method to revise knowledge from previous lessons. Teachers cause pupils to think and to learn new ideas, and teachers check pupils' understanding. A very good example of this process at work was observed. In Year 4, pupils had been learning about time during the mathematics lesson in the morning. A few pupils were having difficulties understanding some aspects of their work and they received a short intensive burst of extra help in a very small group that afternoon with a teaching assistant.
13. Teachers have a wide spread of knowledge and skills that they use to very good effect. Many examples were observed of teachers' expertise. Teachers in the foundation unit skilfully ensure that each child receives the personal attention that they need. There is a happy and constructive atmosphere in the nursery and reception classes. All adults are clear what they want children to attain. Children make a very good start to their education. Activities are varied and well planned. Teachers take full account of children's emotional and social needs and provide, for example, role-play opportunities in the nursery 'post-office.'
14. Teachers provide a series of activities that fully reflect the curriculum recommended for children of this age. An excellent lesson was observed where nursery children learned about the qualities of clay, and about the story of 'The Little Yellow Chicken.' Children were completely involved in the lesson in a productive way. Parents were made very welcome and relationships throughout the lesson were excellent. Opportunities were taken to develop language during the work with clay, such as describing how pushing a finger through the clay makes a 'hole.' The story was used very effectively to help pupils learn names and recognise colours.
15. Teachers in Years 1 and 2 continue the very good start made in the Foundation Stage. The staff follows the behaviour code, which means pupils know what is expected of them in every class. Pupils are particularly effectively managed. In a very good lesson in Year 1, pupils learned to read for meaning and to blend letters to make words in a literacy lesson. The lesson was very well planned and there was close attention to what pupils had learned previously and in this lesson, so that the planning could be equally effective in the future. The teacher used effective questioning to keep pupils on task and to find out what they knew. She reinforced important ideas, such as the use of capital letters and full stops so that pupils would learn to use them automatically in the future.
16. In Year 6, pupils learned about reversible and irreversible changes in science. The teacher had a very pleasant manner with the pupils that encouraged all to participate in answering questions. He made it very clear which elements of the lesson would be assessed and explained clearly what each group of pupils had to do. A pupil with

special educational needs was very sensitively involved in the lesson and given enough help to ensure that she learnt as much as any other pupil. The teacher demonstrated various processes and pupils became excited by the behaviour of baking powder. They learnt about safe working practices, discovered that seemingly inert substances can produce some startling results when they are mixed together and also learned to write clearly about what they had seen.

17. English (literacy) and mathematics (numeracy) are very effectively taught. The challenging work set in literacy and numeracy lessons has led to pupils' very good progress and high results in Year 6. Pupils' standards in literacy and numeracy benefit from work done in other subjects. Teachers develop pupils' understanding of spelling, punctuation and grammar in many lessons. Pupils continue to learn to write clearly, to read for information and to express their ideas clearly when speaking. Pupils use, for example, graphs in geography that they interpret using well chosen words. In design and technology, pupils use their powers of estimation and measurement to help them make things as accurately as they can.
18. An important part of the provision that the school makes for a significant number of pupils is based on a small group approach. Pupils who need extra practice in basic skills, such as aspects of reading, spelling and writing, receive extra intensive support from the special needs teacher and highly competent support staff. This provision is having a very good effect on standards and on pupils' confidence in themselves. The quick use of assessment information so that pupils receive extra help as soon as they need it is very effective indeed.

### **Pupils are very well behaved and work hard.**

19. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good. Pupils' responses enhance their progress and the standards they attain because virtually all pupils make the most of what they are offered. They show a keen interest in school life and most have a thirst for knowledge. Pupils work well together and they behave very well in lessons. Pupils respond very well to the very good teaching. The school's management successfully provides a very wide range of activities so that pupils have every opportunity to respond positively to school. The school works closely with parents. Parents feel that children's behaviour at school is very good. They have great confidence in the school and their trust is communicated to their children.
20. There are many examples of pupils' and children's very good responses to school. Reception children responded very well in a reading lesson. They noticed immediately that the book was upside down and back to front. They showed great interest in the story and one child turned the pages with great care. Children confidently expressed views about the story.
21. In many lessons, pupils showed very good powers of concentration. Pupils were attentive and concentrated very well on the teaching, partly because the teaching is interesting and teachers' expectations of pupils are high. In Year 5, pupils responded very well indeed to the poetry of Dylan Thomas and other activities that the teacher had arranged for pupils to complete. They showed that they could concentrate for long periods on difficult tasks, working with small groups and in pairs. Pupils produced a good standard of work and achieved very well.
22. In Year 3, pupils behaved very well in the ICT suite, as they learned about new skills that would help them edit their work quickly. Pupils amended text, highlighted words

and over-wrote their mistakes successfully. Concentration was very good particularly when the teacher used the white board, which shows a giant computer screen. Pupils' interest and confidence is enhanced by the quality of the teaching. In this lesson the teacher was very confident and demonstrated ideas very quickly and clearly.

23. Pupils with special educational needs respond very well to the extra support they receive. There is a family atmosphere where pupils care for one another. Most pupils are keenly aware of how they can get better at their work and contribute more fully to school life. Pupils play co-operatively and sensibly in the playground and play a variety of games. Pupils have opportunities to collect and deliver things to classes, which they enjoy. Pupils carry out these activities reliably. A group of older girls enjoy school so much that they have created their own lunchtime clubs. They find out about the things that interest them, set tasks for each other to do and reward each other with their own certificates.

### **The school makes a major contribution to the work of other schools and the local community.**

24. The school has held 'Beacon' status for nearly two years. It gained the award for the high standard of pupils' work in challenging social circumstances. The school fully deserves this award for its work. Many aspects of the school's work are worthy of scrutiny, for example, its systems for making checks on the quality of teaching and learning, the provision for pupils with special educational needs and the breadth of the curriculum.
25. The school has led many positive projects that have helped an increasing number of schools and more than 150 teachers in the region. Beacon activities include working with families to raise levels of their children's attainment before they attend the nursery. Teachers from other schools join the school to see how it provides for parents. The school supports programmes that promote the provision for pupils' special educational needs and pupils' under achievement in literacy. The school has a close link with a local special school and has begun to integrate some pupils with behavioural problems on a regular basis most weeks. Classroom assistants have been trained in numeracy skills. The school has provided opportunities for teachers of Years 7 and 8 from secondary schools to observe some literacy lessons. The headteacher participates in an important research project about leadership in schools with challenging circumstances.
26. The school works closely with a small group of other schools. Although the school is used as a resource for other schools to observe good practice, there have also been positive benefits for Our Lady, Star of the Sea also. For example, teachers' expertise has been recognised across the local education authority in English, mathematics and physical education.
27. Over the past few years, the school has become adept in gaining recognition for its work. The school has the Basic Skills Primary Quality Mark that recognises the provision for basic skills in English and mathematics. The school has been commended for its work in the environment through the Queen Mother's birthday awards. The school has raised large amounts of money to support its work. For example, a national company paid for the computers in the suite.

**The management and leadership of the school are very good. The headteacher provides very strong leadership.**

28. Since the last inspection, the school has responded very effectively to what needed to be done. An important development has been the accelerated learning programmes for younger pupils and the targeted learning system for literacy and numeracy for older pupils, to successfully improve pupils' speaking skills. The school has answered the key issues from the previous report through its very effective policy for equality of opportunity. The school emphasises that each pupil is unique and special and should have equal access to all the school does. All pupils, for example, are included in school productions and sports days. The school checks pupils' results, looks for imbalances between boys and girls, and where necessary takes appropriate action to boost pupils' performances.
29. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and direction for the school. The headteacher has clear and high expectations of all staff. He knows all pupils well and takes a detailed interest in their standards of work. The headteacher greets pupils every morning in the playground and there is a strong emphasis on caring for pupils before, during and after the school day. Every pupil is valued. The deputy headteacher sets a very good example in all matters, not least in her excellent organisation of the provision for pupils with special educational needs. The management of the school has steadily improved the quality of education in the school. The management ensures that all pupils' needs are met each day and parents strongly confirm that this is the case.
30. The general aims of the school underpin a strong sense of shared purpose evident between all groups involved in the school. The school sets out to be a caring Christian community where all adults work for the benefit of children. The school has committed itself to a rich curriculum with adequate time given to the spiritual, pastoral, moral and social development of pupils. The school is very successful in this. The school has developed very important and beneficial links with local organisations. Employees from a nearby housing association give some of their own time to children in the school and support, for example, after school activities.
31. The governing body provides very good support for the management of the school and ensures that it makes a significant contribution to the school development planning process. Many governors work in the school and others visit school regularly and work in classes. Governors attend whole school and class assemblies, raise funds and attend all school productions. The chair of governors has an excellent view of the strengths of the school and what it needs to do next. He challenges the school to justify what it is doing very regularly and expects good detailed reasons. Governors make checks on what the school does and any matters that arise are discussed thoroughly. For example, a committee of governors regularly reviews the way the school spends its money and the staffing committee successfully appoints good staff.
32. The school has a good long-term financial forecast based upon predicted pupil numbers and staff costs. Rightly, the headteacher and governors have supported a school organisation based on a generous pupil-to-adult ratio. They recognise that pupils need much adult support to be successful in their work. Pupils have benefited greatly from this decision.
33. Teachers with responsibilities are very effective in their work. English and mathematics co-ordinators, for example, have developed their subjects effectively. Consequently, pupils' results have improved and pupils' achievement is a strength of



the school. In all three subjects, resources for use by pupils in lessons are good. Targets for lessons are consistently well written throughout the school. Overall, the school is successful because all teachers work together to improve what the school does. Teachers are thorough in what they do and share expertise regularly. They attend many courses and bring back information for all to hear and to act upon.

34. The administration of the school is very efficient. There is a good system for recording attendance. Few pupils arrive late, or do not have a good reason for their absence. Further improvements in attendance now depend on the support of outside agencies. The school has done all it reasonably can to boost pupils' attendance. The office staff keeps a careful check on spending and ensures that governors receive regular reports about financial matters. The school building is well maintained and pupils use modern books and equipment.
35. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very effectively managed. The school identifies pupils with special educational needs early in their school careers. Early identification of pupils with needs has allowed the school to develop individual education plans for pupils that boost their performances considerably, in many cases up to the standards that are expected nationally by the time pupils are eleven years old. Pupils make very good progress. All pupils with special educational needs are included in all the school does. Support staff help to meet their needs very effectively. Support staff and teachers work very closely together. Teachers give clear directions about what pupils need to learn next or practice again after the lesson has finished. This method of organisation results in pupils making rapid progress.
36. The headteacher, governing body and staff have successfully recorded the school's priorities in the 'School Improvement Plan.' Targets are reviewed regularly and they are very useful tools for judging progress. The current school development plan for 2001-2003 is a good working document. It contains the main areas that the school needs to address to make further progress. The document indicates that the school knows its strengths and areas for development very well. The budget under-spend is small. The school correctly maintains this sum of money for contingencies, such as to offset the effects of a small decline in pupil numbers in the future, in common with many schools in the area.
37. The school's evaluation of its performance is excellent. The school checks its progress rigorously using the school development plan and associated documents. Staff have analysed the quality of pupils' work and watched their colleagues teach. This process has had a positive effect on teachers' work, because recommendations for improvement have been made in reports to teachers and they are followed up. The school has very clearly identified its strengths and areas for improvement. The management of the school realised how important self-evaluation is and attended training provided by the local education authority in the past. Yearly, the school undertakes an analysis of pupils' performance information. Many small groups of pupils receive extra attention because of this analysis and consequently they perform better than they might have done. The management and teachers look closely at the pace that the curriculum is taught, set targets for groups and individual pupils and fine-tune the staff training programme and performance management targets. In this way, the school gives itself the best chance it can to attain its overall targets for pupil performance each year.

**Pupils' moral and social education is very good and the school takes very good care of all pupils.**

38. The school's provision for pupils' moral and social development has had a very positive effect on the way pupils approach their work and in the degree of effort they make in all aspects of school life. The social and moral tone of acts of collective worship is clear. The headteacher in the first assembly of the week set the tone. It was a quiet, orderly meeting of the whole school where the headteacher, staff and pupils sang hymns and the headteacher made several well chosen comments and issued reminders.
39. The school's emphasis on developing pupils' social skills has been successful because the school takes the time to educate pupils about doing the right things. Pupils consequently behave very well in lessons. Their progress in lessons is enhanced because they make friends easily and most co-operate well. There is an expectation that pupils will behave responsibly. Movement around the school is good and pupils are reliable and helpful. Older pupils work independently for significant periods and enjoy being treated as capable young people. Pupils are ready to take on the new challenge of secondary education at the end of Year 6.
40. Parents feel that the school makes a very good job of teaching their children right from wrong. Their children know the school rules and parents are pleased that good manners are taught well as part of the daily life of the school. There is a range of after school clubs arranged by all teachers and support staff. The clubs are homework, ICT, sports, drama and choir. The school encourages pupils to raise funds and care for children less fortunate than themselves through the nominated charity CAFOD. Teachers arrange residential activities for all pupils from the Years 2 to 6. In this way, the school is successful in improving pupils' confidence and social and educational capabilities through environmental studies, outdoor pursuits, hill climbing and self-care opportunities.
41. The school arranges a wide range of other activities to develop pupils as young responsible people. Pupils take part in a project called Going for Gold, which aims to develop pupils' sense of responsibility and understanding of the world of business. Since the last inspection, pupils' progress has been recorded more thoroughly in their records of achievement. Good behaviour is included in the record. Every week deserving pupils receive rewards in an assembly for the good things they have done. Current local and world issues receive attention. A school eco-committee explores environmental issues. The school offers a home reading loan service because there are few bookshops in the area. Pupils visit the Sefton coastline, local museums, farms and parks. Professional musicians and dance teachers help the school with their summer concert, which is performed to the local community.
42. The school takes very good care of pupils. There is firm evidence of the success of the school's work in the responses of parents. The school is very successful in maintaining the very good behaviour of pupils. Expectations are high and nearly all pupils do not want to let the school down. The staff works as a team at all times and they share the responsibility for maintaining good behaviour throughout the school.

### **Parents have a very high opinion of the school.**

43. The school has developed a close and excellent partnership with parents. The quality of the links with parents is another feature of the very strong management of the school. The exemplary links have come about because the school has given a high priority to making the school accessible to parents.

44. Links between parents and the school have remained excellent since the last inspection. Forty-nine parents returned the questionnaires. Parents showed how very positively they feel about the school. For example, 96 per cent of parents feel that the school is well managed. Ninety-eight per cent of parents feel that the teaching is good and 100 per cent of parents reported that their children like school and that the school's expectations of their children are high. All parents who responded to the questionnaire feel that they are kept well informed about their children's education. Children feel positive about schooling because teachers make lessons interesting and show much interest in all pupils' wellbeing. Contented parents communicate this to their children and therefore children at school know that they are receiving a good education. Parents have many good reasons why they should support the school. Children achieve very well and are happy at school.
45. At the meeting for parents, there was strong support for the school. Parents have noticed, for example, that the school has continued to promote high standards in all that it does. Parents feel their children are prepared well for the next school. They commented that the school rewards pupils for any aspect of their work or social behaviour, such as kindness to others. They feel the rewards for good attendance have been successful and that their children are even keener to go to school because of this. Parents are content with the homework set and feel that it is well organised. Several evenings each week, for example, children have work that reinforces the knowledge they have learned at school during the week. Many children attend the after school homework club which parents and inspectors feel is a good idea.
46. Parents feel that teachers care about their concerns and there is very good attention to their questions. They feel there is no barrier between parents and school. Crucially, parents feel that the school has, 'Got a lot better,' and that, 'Teachers are like second mums.' The courses for parents have been welcomed and parents who have attended them know, for example, much more about how the school works and about what and how their children learn.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

47. The inspection team identified no major areas for improvement.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

48. The following minor areas for development listed below should be included in the current year's school development plan and the revised document submitted to Ofsted.
  - On a few occasions, older lower attainers do not have enough time to complete their work in mathematics and some work is untidy, which suggests the pace of work is too great. Further consideration needs to be given to the match of work for lower attainers and for the provision to be checked more closely.

- The last annual report to parents from the governors has several items missing. The school needs to include all the items mentioned during the inspection in the next report.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### *Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection*

Number of lessons observed

19
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Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

7
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### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	10	4	0	0	0	0
Percentage	26	53	21	0	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents five percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	9	181
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	99

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	70

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

### Attendance

<b>Authorised absence</b>	%
School data	7.4
National comparative data	5.2

<b>Unauthorised absence</b>	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	9	9	18

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	8	8	8
	Girls	8	7	8
	Total	16	15	16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (75)	83 (82)	89 (96)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	8	8	8
	Girls	7	7	7
	Total	15	15	15
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	83 (82)	83 (96)	83 (79)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	14	15	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	12	13
	Girls	13	14	14
	Total	25	26	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	86 (72)	90 (75)	93 (89)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	12	13
	Girls	13	14	14
	Total	25	26	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	86 (72)	90 (78)	93 (83)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	178
Any other minority ethnic group	0

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19
Average class size	26

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	130

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	25
Number of pupils per FTE adult	9

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1.0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2.0
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	2	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

*This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	571230
Total expenditure	555998
Expenditure per pupil	2397
Balance brought forward from previous year	6793
Balance carried forward to next year	22025

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*



## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	199
Number of questionnaires returned	49

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	78	22	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	84	14	0	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	82	10	4	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	76	20	0	0	4
The teaching is good.	88	10	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	90	10	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	90	8	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	88	12	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	82	16	2	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	92	4	2	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	86	12	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	82	12	2	0	4

### Other issues raised by parents

Parents very strongly supported the school at the meeting for parents and no widely held issues of a negative nature were raised.