

Inspection Report

MORTIMER PRIMARY SCHOOL

Unique Reference Number: 108673
LEA: South Tyneside

Headteacher: Mr G S Seagrove
Chair of Governors: Mrs A Carter

Lead Inspector: Sonja Øyen HMI
Inspection Dates: 22 - 23 September 2004

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 as part of work associated with Ofsted's developments for future inspection in schools. Under Section 12 (3) of the Act, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI) elects that the inspection shall be treated as if it were an inspection under section 10 of the Act

© Crown copyright 2004

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

School Contact Details

Headteacher: Mr G S Seagrove
Chair of Governors: Mrs A Carter

Mortimer Primary School
Mortimer Road
South Tyneside
Tyne and Wear
NE34 0RW

Telephone: 0191 455 4504
E mail: g.seagrove@southtyneside.org.uk

INTRODUCTION

The inspection was a pilot of the new arrangements for inspection announced by Ofsted in its consultation paper of February 2004. It was carried out with the support and co-operation of the staff of Mortimer Primary School and of the local education authority.

The inspection was carried out by four of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Description of the school

Mortimer Primary is a very large and popular school in South Tyneside, with 630 pupils, of whom 65 three- and four-year-old children are taught part-time in the nursery. All of the 20 pupils from ethnic minority groups speak English well. The number of pupils claiming free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average. Attainment on entry to the school is average.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

This is a very good, happy school where every pupil matters. The governors, headteacher and staff know their school extremely well and are not complacent in seeking ways to improve. They have accurately judged the standards to be very good; likewise the teaching, curriculum and level of care for the pupils. The parents hold the school in high regard. The pupils want to be there and they are proud of their school. Very effective teaching results in high academic standards matched by the pupils' very good personal development. The strong, corporate commitment to make the school even better reflects the exceptionally good leadership of the headteacher and high quality teamwork, especially in the Foundation Stage. Mortimer Primary School gives very good value for money.

Grade: 1

Improvement since the last inspection

Under the leadership of a new headteacher, the school has made very good improvement since the inspection in 1999. It has successfully built on its strengths and has responded positively to the issues raised. The quality of teaching is now much stronger. The teachers have raised their expectations of what the pupils can achieve and standards have risen markedly. There is now a good programme of professional development for all staff. There have been few changes in the teaching personnel and the appointment of many more teaching assistants has added greatly to the quality of support for the pupils, especially in the infant and junior years. The school development plan now gives a longer-term vision and highlights the financial implications of proposals. The procedures to track the pupils' absence are more rigorous and attendance has risen significantly.

Grade: 1

Capacity to improve

The school's self evaluation gives a clear, accurate agenda for improvement. It is based on a thorough review of the school's performance and sets out realistic but challenging targets in many aspects of the school's work. Sensible, prudent decisions underlie the use of the school's resources. The headteacher has a clear vision for the years ahead and draws well on the skills and expertise of others. Senior managers and subject coordinators know what is expected of them. They are growing steadily into their role as leaders of programmes to drive up standards. The school is very well placed to improve further.

Grade: 1

What the school should do to improve further

In order to raise standards further and to refine the programme of improvement the school should:

- broaden the scope and sharpen the purpose of monitoring and evaluation at all levels of management
- strengthen further the teaching and learning by sharing the very good practice and capitalising on the flair and creativity of the best
- involve the pupils even more in assessing their own learning.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

The inspectors agree with the staff that the pupils achieve very well in their time at school. They get off to a particularly good start in the nursery and reception year. The pupils are really keen to learn; they try their best and are rarely absent because they do not want to miss out on their learning. School is an interesting place; the pupils have a host of opportunities to develop their own interests in and out of lessons. Within this positive picture there are some variations in the rate of progress in different year groups and subjects, notably in mathematics. Nevertheless, over time, the pupils attain high standards and make good, and most make very good progress in reading, writing, mathematics and science. The school's achievements in sport testify to its high commitment to excellence across the curriculum.

Pupils' personal development is very good. The warm, encouraging, positive atmosphere in the school is a striking feature: the pupils and staff work in partnership, and respect and trust each other. The pupils enjoy school; they feel safe and very well cared for. Their behaviour is excellent and they have outstandingly good attitudes to all aspects of school life. They are enthusiastic, attentive to their teachers and eager to get on with their work. They help each other, work together very well and rise to the occasion when given special responsibilities, such as a monitor or house captain.

The pupils understand environmental issues, such as the need to recycle waste, and they make a significant contribution to the wider community. They are very well prepared to be responsible young citizens.

The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has many excellent features. The pupils have a very strong understanding of the difference between right and wrong and demonstrate kindness and consideration towards each other. The rich programme of educational visits, special events, the ongoing collaboration with an artist in residence, musical and dramatic performances, all make a very positive contribution to the pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development.

Grade 1

QUALITY OF PROVISION

The school rightly judges the quality of its provision to be very good. There are many strengths, not least the very high quality of the support for pupils with special educational needs. The overall quality of the teaching is very good with pockets of flair and highly effective teaching which accelerate the pupils' learning. The teachers work effectively in teams; they support one another and share ideas and expertise. All the adults know the pupils as individuals and guide them well. The teachers make good use of the information from a range of assessment procedures to plan suitable, often very motivating, programmes of work that build effectively on the pupils' prior knowledge and interests. Assistants and parents helpers are well informed and effectively deployed; they make a significant contribution to the pupils' learning and care.

The regular, systematic and rigorous tracking of the pupils' progress, particularly in English, mathematics and science, contributes to the high standards achieved. The school has effective practices to identify and provide for the needs of different groups of pupils, particularly those with specific learning difficulties and those whose progress has slowed. Throughout the year, the different strategies to group pupils and provide catch-up or extended work help the pupils to achieve well. The work in lessons, however, does not

always challenge the higher-attaining pupils sufficiently. The teachers' use of interactive activities and challenges results in a high level of pupil engagement and noticeable progress. Good learning habits enable the pupils to make the most of the opportunities offered to them. This starts in the Foundation Stage, where the staff are very skilled in fostering the pupils' independence and inquisitiveness. The children settle quickly into the routines and are confident to make their own decisions about what to do. For example, they pose their own challenges on the outdoor climbing wall.

The teaching of the basic skills in reading, writing and number is highly effective and the older pupils diligently apply their skills in other subjects. Their work is marked regularly but sometimes there is a lack of involvement of the pupils in the assessment of their own learning. The best marking and feedback are high quality and help the pupils to appreciate the relevance of their learning to other situations, to learn from their mistakes and to use the feedback from their teachers effectively.

The curriculum is very good overall and the school has deservedly received national and local recognition for its work. All pupils have full access to the curriculum which is enriched by visitors and educational visits. The weeks when all classes take part in activities related to a theme, such as health, add to the pupils' social well-being. The many extra activities provide opportunities for the pupils to further their interests and to participate with others in sports and the arts. The Education Business Partnership and Young Enterprise Scheme work are imaginative and innovative. The chance for the pupils to produce a stunning, professional school newspaper, and to talk to adults about their jobs, is a good introduction to the world of work and significantly raises the pupils' aspirations, motivation and levels of performance across a range of subjects.

Grade: 1

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is accurate in its view that the overall quality of leadership and management is very good. The headteacher's drive, his strong working partnership with the deputy headteacher, together with the hard work and commitment of all the staff, ensure the school runs very smoothly and all strive to improve. The headteacher has high expectations of the staff and pupils. He sets the tone in getting the best from all. Although the staff have readily followed his exceptionally good lead, some middle managers are too dependent on him to steer their work. As a result, monitoring and evaluation are not as sharp as they should be. Governance is very effective. The governing body is well informed, highly supportive of the school and ensures that it meets statutory requirements. It uses the budget sensibly to meet the needs of all pupils and improve the quality of the overall provision while sustaining a high number of teachers and teaching assistants. The buildings are spacious but retain the intimate ambience of a smaller school. The development of part of the central courtyard has been particularly effective in providing outdoor experiences for the children in the reception year.

Grade: 1

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet 'Complaining about HMI-led Ofsted inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2004. This document may be freely reproduced in whole or in part, for non-commercial purposes, provided the source and the date are acknowledged.