



Star of the Sea RC Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108622
LEA North Tyneside
Inspection number 285588
Inspection dates 15 June 2006 to 16 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Andrew Scott

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Arcot Avenue
School category	Voluntary aided		Whitley Bay
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Tyne and Wear NE25 9DY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 200 8728
Number on roll	366	Fax number	0191 200 8600
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Father Gerry Lee
Date of previous inspection	1 June 2000	Headteacher	Mr Michael Willcock

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 15 June 2006 - 16 June 2006	Inspection number 285588
-----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, 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.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average primary school serves pupils from a wide and quite affluent area in and around Whitley Bay. The pupils are predominantly White British, but a small number are from minority ethnic backgrounds and do not speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The attainment of children when they start school is broadly average.

Major refurbishments to the school are close to completion. These include several new classrooms and a Nursery unit. The school has held the Healthy School Award every year since 1997. Other awards include the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Investors in People, the Tidy School Award and an Intermediate International School Award. The Catholic faith is central to the ethos of the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Star of the Sea is a good school. It is a happy place where respect and tolerance abound. Parents and pupils appreciate the warm and caring atmosphere that permeates the school, as well as its high standards. One parent echoed the sentiments of many: 'The school is a welcoming, supportive and nurturing environment for my child.'

Pupils are considerate and supportive of one another and behave well, especially in lessons. Consistently high attendance demonstrates their enthusiasm for school and zest for learning. Pupils readily adopt a healthy lifestyle through, for example, wise lunch options and a keenness for sport. They speak confidently and openly, and express their ideas clearly whilst respecting the opinions of others. Pupils absorb and are encouraged to reflect upon the strong yet gentle Christian nature of the school. A brief prayer written by a girl in Year 2 provided a simple but telling example: 'Thank you, Jesus, for flowers because I like to smell them.'

Parents are right to praise the leadership of the headteacher. He sets the tone of the school and leads by example. He takes a keen interest in all the pupils and he and other staff are very approachable and willing to listen. One parent attributed this to the domino effect that the headteacher's 'people and leadership skills' has had on staff. Parents are also complimentary about how skilfully the school has minimised any disruption caused by the new building work over the past year.

Standards have been consistently above average in speaking and listening and especially in reading. During the inspection, there was a delightful environmental debate by Year 5 pupils, for example, in which the cogent arguments of the 'turtle supporters' held sway over those of the 'hotel owners'. The school places a high priority on key skills in English, mathematics and science. As a result, teaching of these subjects is good, and pupils achieve well. The quality of education in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and children attain the goals set for them. The school does not give its pupils enough scope to work independently. This is especially true in the Reception classes where teaching and learning are often too formal for children of this age. Throughout the school, pupils have too few opportunities to plan and assess their own work.

The curriculum is satisfactory. Its strengths are in English, mathematics and science and in the support given to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but more account should be taken of the needs and interests of pupils with special gifts and talents. The curriculum is enriched by a good variety of visits and visitors, but some parents have been concerned that the number of after-school clubs has dwindled during the current refurbishment. The school is well aware that it needs to upgrade its information and communication technology (ICT) resources to keep pupils' skills up to scratch. Links between subjects are not used enough to broaden learning in literacy, numeracy and ICT.

Senior staff provide good leadership for English, mathematics and science, notably in ensuring high standards. Teachers work well together, as when planning lessons and other activities. In a hymn practice, for instance, staff with guitars combined enthusiastically to rouse pupils to sing lustily. New staff and new pupils are readily

absorbed into the school family and rapidly feel at home. Governors are very supportive and have a clear view of the school's strengths.

Management is satisfactory. Regular monitoring helps the school to identify inconsistencies, for example in ICT and in teachers' marking. However, the school does not always analyse all issues with enough clarity to ascertain the root causes, such as why writing is not as good as reading. The school's action plans are sensible, but do not always propose innovative solutions. There is ample emphasis on the main subjects but little on other subjects where attainment is not always high.

There has been good progress since the last inspection, and consequently standards in the core subjects have been consistently high. Beneficial links with the high school, the church and community have been strengthened. The good leadership team of the headteacher and deputy headteacher has been strengthened by the appointment of two new assistant headteachers. The new building work is providing a vital boost to morale after years of having to make do with inferior classrooms. Therefore, the school is in a good position to improve further and offers good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the way that the curriculum is planned and taught in the Foundation Stage.
- Ensure that pupils have ample scope for independent learning and that literacy, numeracy and ICT are fully developed through other subjects.
- Be more rigorous in analysing the school's performance and more innovative in identifying strategies for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

- Progress through the Reception Year is satisfactory and children attain their expected goals.
- By Years 2 and 6, attainment is above average, especially in reading, speaking and listening. Pupils use language confidently.
- Overall, pupils' achievement is good, including that for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who have English as an additional language.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

- Pupils have excellent attitudes to work, although presentation is not always of top quality.
- Pupils feel safe and have an excellent approach to a healthy lifestyle.
- Spirituality is part and parcel of everyday life.

- Pupils from all ethnic backgrounds are fully integrated into school life; this is strengthening pupils' awareness of life in a multicultural Britain. There are good links with overseas schools.
- Pupils contribute well to the school community, especially through the work of school council.
- Pupils acquire good skills to prepare them for their next school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

- Teaching is good, not least because pupils are really keen to learn; even in lessons where teaching was of a satisfactory rather than good quality, pupils tended to make good progress.
- Teachers are knowledgeable, plan their lessons well, and create a very good climate for learning in their classrooms.
- Some over-reliance on worksheets, especially in the teaching of science, history and geography, does little to inspire pupils.
- Teachers' marking is not consistent enough to ensure that pupils are always certain how well they are doing and how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

- There is good emphasis on basic skills but not enough on independent learning.
- There is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and pupils with English as an additional language.
- There is a good programme of visits and other activities.
- Provision for ICT is just satisfactory. There are plans for an ICT suite.
- Links between subjects are underused to give pupils valuable practise in literacy, numeracy and ICT.
- The school has yet to formulate its plans for gifted and talented pupils and recognises this as an area for development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

- Efficient procedures ensure pupils' health and safety.
- A caring staff, inspired by the headteacher, ensure that pupils feel valued; a compassionate ethos pervades the school.
- Good systems to record pupils' progress help teachers plan further work accurately.

- Teachers set pupils challenging targets to improve.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to plan and assess their own work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

- The headteacher provides good, stable and considerate leadership.
- The school enjoys a good reputation in the locality and has close, productive links with parents, the high school and local churches.
- The school improvement plan lacks creativity and innovation in defining actions to tackle identified areas for development.
- Governors have a good understanding of the strengths of the school, a tight grip on its finances and are closely involved in its daily life.
- Resources are not plentiful but deployed well.
- The school has done well to maintain high standards since the last inspection; it has good capacity for further improvement.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Alexandra House

33 Kingsway

London WC2B 6SE

T 0207 421 6800

F 0207 421 6707

www.ofsted.gov.uk

The School Council

Star of the Sea RC Primary School

Arcot Avenue

Whitley Bay

Tyne and Wear

NE25 9DY

16 June 2006

Dear Pupils

Mrs Wallis, Mrs Ulyatt and I enjoyed our visit to your school and meeting you and all the staff. We would like to thank you for the part you played in helping us to get to know your school.

Like you, we believe your school is a good one. You are clearly very proud of your school and enjoy coming every day. Indeed, your attendance is impressive. You get on really well together and look after each other thoughtfully. You have a great attitude in lessons and respond well to the good teaching you receive, especially in English, mathematics and science. It is clear why your standards are usually so high.

You have a good headteacher. He keeps the school on the right track and has a great interest in your well-being. He works hard with all staff to make sure that your school is a caring and safe place to be and that you achieve well in your work. The new classrooms should inspire you to even higher standards.

We would like to see more opportunities for you to work independently from Reception right through to Year 6, and for you to practise your literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in other lessons. We have also asked the school to look at some different ideas for making the school even better.

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Scott

Lead inspector