

Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114278
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	289862
Inspection dates	22–23 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Gianna Ulyatt

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	111
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alan Kitching
Headteacher	Miss Margaret Coughlin
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2003
School address	Fleming Field Shotton Durham County Durham DH6 2JQ
Telephone number	0191 5261531
Fax number	0191 5261531

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	22–23 May 2007
Inspection number	289862

© Crown copyright 2007

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 an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is situated in a former coal mining community on the outskirts of Peterlee where unemployment is high. It is smaller than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. Most pupils are from White British families: very few are from minority ethnic groups. The number of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Pupils are taught in mixed age classes and sometimes across key stages, depending on the numbers in each year. The school offers a breakfast club and a number of after school clubs as well as family learning support programmes. Due to the recent closure of a nearby school, several pupils of various ages have joined this school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with a friendly, family atmosphere. It has outstanding features in personal development and in the care, guidance and support it offers pupils. Value for money is good. The school's motto of 'Let your light shine' is evident in the way the school ensures that pupils of all abilities achieve as well as they can. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive and are very pleased with 'the high standards' that are achieved.

Pupils, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who join the school midway through their primary education, achieve well and standards at the end of Year 6 are above average. Children enter school with skill levels below those expected of most four-year-olds. They make very good progress in the Foundation Stage and standards are broadly average by the start of Year 1. Good progress continues and pupils reach standards that are just above average by the end of Key Stage 1. Results at Key Stage 2 are generally above average in English, mathematics and science. This represents good progress.

Pupils thrive in the caring and supportive environment, which permeates all aspects of the school. Pupils explain that, 'We are treated with respect.' Pupils' outstanding personal development is evident in the mature way they discuss issues. They speak highly of the encouragement they receive to help them to reflect and make up their own mind about right and wrong. Older pupils willingly take on responsibility and set a good example. They show great care towards those in need within the wider world. Although they are sorry to leave the school, pupils say they are looking forward to continuing their education in the secondary school and feel well prepared for it.

Teaching and learning are good, throughout the school. The very good team work and strong focus on the key skills of literacy and mathematics ensure that pupils achieve well. Relationships are excellent and adults treat each pupil as an individual. The curriculum is planned well to take full account of the different age groups and abilities in the classes. Expectations are high and teachers make sure pupils know exactly what they are learning. Planning in the Foundation Stage is good; however, opportunities for learning outdoors are restricted pending the construction of an appropriate outdoor learning environment. The school provides exceptional levels of care for its pupils and the required safety and safeguarding procedures are in place.

Leadership and management are good and account for the continued good standards. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and the collegiate approach to management means that staff at all levels are responsible for bringing about improvements. Through recent monitoring, all are aware of what the school does well and what needs to develop. Governors support and challenge the school well. Since the last inspection, the school has continued to develop and improve. The one issue concerning writing has been addressed well and the school has good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure good use of an appropriate outdoor learning environment for children in the Foundation Stage.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and pupils' achievement is good. Attainment on entry to the school is below expectations especially in early literacy and mathematics. Children make very good progress in the Foundation Stage, especially in their early reading skills. By the time they begin Year 1, their attainment is broadly at the expected level for this age group. Progress in Key Stage 1 is good and standards at the end of Year 2 are usually just above average. However, in the 2006 tests they were below average. Nevertheless these results reflect good achievement because about one third of those pupils were new to the school and a similar proportion had learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Standards are above average for Year 6 pupils. The trend fluctuates from year to year because in this small school, the number of pupils in each year group varies significantly. For example, in 2006 almost half the pupils had learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Importantly, pupils achieve well and standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have been consistently above average for several years with very little variation between attainment in English, mathematics and science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are friendly and confident and show tremendous pride in their school. They enjoy the times devoted to prayer and record their reflections in their personal diaries. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school because they say, '...it's like a big family.' Attendance is well above average. The school promotes healthy living and the Activemark Gold award is testament to its commitment. Pupils, therefore, clearly understand that good food and exercise lead to a healthy lifestyle. They enjoy sporting activities and exercise regularly to music before lessons begin. Pupils understand very well the need for rules; their behaviour is outstanding and pupils feel very safe in school. Older pupils set a good example for younger ones and willingly help them at break and lunch times. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously to ensure the smooth running of their classrooms. They are considerate and very caring of others in school and in the wider community and help to raise funds for international charities. The school council is proud of its work and pleased that its requests about uniform changes and classroom blinds have been positively received. The above average standards mean that pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education. Children in the Foundation Stage get off to a good start. They improve in confidence, learn to work together and concentrate well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good with some outstanding features in the very clear way teachers use explanations, demonstrations and instructions. These are very effective in promoting good learning for all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. All teachers ensure that the work they plan for pupils closely matches the needs of individuals even though there is a vast ability range in all classes. As a result, pupils achieve well and clearly enjoy their lessons. Relationships are excellent and pupils collaborate very well. Able teaching assistants provide very good support that enables pupils to make good progress.

Teachers are effective in promoting discussions and encouraging pupils to think about their responses. As a consequence, pupils express their answers clearly and accurately. The marking of the children's work is good with supportive comments to assist understanding. Pupils confirm they always know what they have to consider in their next piece of work. The responsibility that pupils take for their own learning varies and the school is looking at ways to further promote pupils' independence in learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and the flexible approach takes account of mixed age classes, so pupils benefit from work that matches their ability, not just their age. The strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy ensures the good results at the end of Year 6 are well maintained. Nonetheless, the curriculum is broad and includes a strong emphasis on personal, social and health education, which has an outstanding influence on pupils' self-esteem and well-being. Information and communication technology supports learning across other subjects. The school is working to further develop the more creative aspects of the curriculum. The very effective Foundation Stage curriculum provides a good balance between adult led and independent work although opportunities to play and learn in the fresh air are limited.

Visitors, and visits to local places of interest make learning more meaningful, broaden pupils' experience and encourage them to become more aware of their community. Extra-curricular activities, such as dance, football and multi skills clubs promote a healthy lifestyle.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Safeguarding systems are in place to ensure the health and safety of pupils. The welfare, pastoral and emotional support for pupils is excellent. The family atmosphere, within a very supportive environment, is based on Christian principles and pupils confirm that they feel very safe and secure in school. Very good induction procedures ensure that the youngest children settle well into the Reception class. Links with external agencies, alongside very good additional guidance and support in school, provide vulnerable pupils with the confidence they need to enable them to make very good progress, particularly in their basic skills and their personal development and self-confidence. Teachers know every pupil very well and use an effective system to track academic progress. The progress of each pupil is carefully monitored and the information is used very effectively to ensure all achieve well. Should any pupil fall behind, the school quickly provides additional support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership, management and governance are good. The strong leadership of the headteacher has ensured the continued good academic standards and outstanding personal development for pupils, over a number of years. An ethos of shared leadership involves staff at all levels in analysing the work of the school. All staff support the thorough and appropriate improvement plan, which is well focused on whole school evaluation. Teamwork is good and the school actively encourages professional development so that new ideas can be shared among all staff to create a common sense of purpose. Governors are well informed and make a good contribution

to the school's place in the community. Newly appointed governors are enthusiastic and readily undertake training to equip them to support and challenge the school. The school has good links with a range of professional services, to improve pupils' education and well-being and ensure that all are fully included. Parents' wholeheartedly support the school and 'have nothing but praise for the teaching staff and management.'

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.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

24 May 2007

Dear Pupils,

Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary, Durham

DH6 2JQ

Your school gives you a good education. I had a very enjoyable time with you because you are very welcoming and friendly. It is good to see you growing up into very confident and mature young people. I particularly liked the conversations at lunch-time and the meetings I had with older pupils and the school council. I could see the youngest children love their class and have lots of interesting work to do. I have asked the school to provide an appropriate outdoor learning environment for them so they get even more chances to learn outside.

You are in a school where adults really care about each one of you. I know you work very hard in lessons and I was very pleased to see the good standards in all subjects. You certainly enjoy reading and are very clear about what you have to do to make your writing and mathematics even better.

I loved looking at the hard sums you got right in your mathematics books and reading your interesting stories. I enjoyed watching you 'waking up' to music in the school hall. You seem very fit.

I was thrilled to see your excellent behaviour in lessons, at lunch time and around the school. You are wonderful role models for younger pupils in the school. Your parents and all adults in school must be very proud of you. You are very caring about younger children who sometimes need help and you also help people who have very little in life, by supporting worthwhile charities.

Some of you are going to new schools in September, but do remember to keep in touch with the good friends you have made in Our Lady of Lourdes.

Thank you again for being so helpful to me while I was in your school.

With very best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Gianna Ulyatt

Lead inspector