

Monkton Infants' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108684
Local Authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	309766
Inspection date	15 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Graeme Clarke

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	198
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Janice Hansen
Headteacher	Mrs Julie Finlay
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2004
School address	St Simon Street South Shields Tyne and Wear NE34 9SD
Telephone number	0191 4561917
Fax number	0191 4240000

Age group	3-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector gathered evidence from lesson observations, looking at pupils' work, assessment information, documents, interviews and discussions with the headteacher, staff, pupils and a governor. He evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following aspects:

- the quality of provision in the Foundation Stage
- pupils' progress, particularly in writing, by those pupils presently in Year 2
- pupils' personal development and well-being
- how well the school and teachers use marking and assessment to support pupils' learning.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found much evidence to confirm that the school's own evaluations are justified, and these have been included in the report.

Description of the school

This broadly average size Infants' school, with a Nursery unit on a separate site about a half mile away from the main building, serves a locality where socio-economic characteristics are well below average. A very high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average although the number with a statement of special educational need is low. Almost all pupils have a White British heritage and none is learning English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Monkton Infants' is a good school with some outstanding aspects. In this inclusive school children's accomplishments reflect excellent achievement and good personal development. Under the strong leadership of the headteacher, ably assisted by her senior team, staff very successfully promote the school's goal of 'Aiming High'. They foster a caring ethos and a philosophy that every child does matter. A minority of parents of Nursery age children have concerns about the school's communication with them, otherwise the majority of parents hold the school in very high regard. One parent's comment sums up their views: 'My child has loved the school from her first day. The teaching is outstanding and my child has made excellent progress. Any problems are listened to carefully and dealt with, with great sensitivity. Children are treated with respect and as individuals, and their safety and well being are very important to all staff.'

Pupils make excellent progress as they move through the school from the time they join the Nursery. Most pupils achieve outstandingly well. Year-on-year, the school has successfully sustained well above average results in the Year 2 assessments. Last year, from a below average beginning in Year 1, pupils reached significantly above average standards. Reading results were the highest ever. However, for the first time in several years writing standards slipped a little, largely because boys did not do as well as girls. Very effective support ensures pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do better than their counterparts elsewhere, especially in mathematics. The school diligently analyses results and had accurately identified that raising writing standards, especially by boys, was a priority. Strategies to improve written work are paying dividends. The current Year 2 pupils have made clear progress and their provisional Key Stage 1 assessments show more have reached the highest levels in reading, writing and mathematics than previously. Most boys have done well in writing. The school has exceeded challenging targets.

Pupils' excellent academic achievement and good personal development result from a successful combination of good teaching, a thoughtfully designed curriculum which reflects how well the school recognises local circumstances, and very effective care, guidance and support. Excellent displays illustrate the high quality of pupils' work and the rich range of activities they enjoy. Assemblies, the recently implemented personal, social and health education programme, and good partnerships with organisations such as the Sage Music Centre and the local business partnerships make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, well being and good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Pupils have a positive outlook and confidence when talking with adults. They act considerately and safely on the playground so that those playing energetically do not spoil the enjoyment of others talking quietly in small groups. They clearly enjoy school life and welcome visitors. Stringent efforts have improved attendance a little, but it stubbornly remains slightly below average. Pupils know the importance of diet to good health and fitness. Their enthusiasm in the morning 'wake and shake' aerobics session and other physical activities justifies the Activemark award. Good conduct is clearly evident in lessons and assembly, and whilst pupils move around the school. Pupils say they are mostly well behaved and that bullying is not a problem. Pupils contribute enthusiastically to school life, for example through their school council and as monitors and playground buddies. Their award winning Eco Club makes a valued contribution to enhance the school grounds. They support charitable activities to help worthy

causes. Pupils' well developed social and above average basic skills, and their awareness of jobs people do, prepare them exceptionally well for their future.

Pupils work industriously at the interesting and challenging activities that teachers carefully design to suit their different aptitudes. Teachers and assistants work well together. They help gifted and talented pupils, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to take a full part in lessons and learn really well. Occasionally though, tasks are too complex for pupils to make a start without help and this slows the pace of learning. Importantly, teachers successfully review pupils' progress and reinforce their learning at key times in the lesson. They rigorously assess pupils' work and identify anyone at risk of falling behind. Carefully planned activities then help pupils to learn well and make good progress. Teachers' marking congratulates pupils on their accomplishments. Marking often gives pupils specific pointers to improve their written work, but less often in mathematics. Teachers meticulously set challenging targets for all pupils in their written work and feed back on how well they are achieving them. This process is leading to improvement.

The headteacher and governors work closely together to ensure the school is well led and managed. The leadership team and governors thoroughly monitor and review the school's work. However, their judgement of its strengths is somewhat modest. They set and successfully act on appropriate priorities for improvement. The recently re-constituted governing body is well led by an experienced chairperson who ensures it meets all current government requirements, for example in its arrangements for child protection and to safeguard the welfare of pupils. Governors have a clear determination to extend their roles and effectiveness through training. Outstanding academic achievement and good personal development reflect excellent value from resources. The school has successfully addressed issues from the last inspection. Given its track record of sustained high standards and excellent achievement in Key Stage 1, the governors' and headteacher's ambition to maintain high standards is well within reach. The school has a good capacity for further improvement and is well placed to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children join the Nursery with abilities which are well below those typical for their age, especially in speech and language. Most parents are pleased with the way their children enjoy school but a large minority of Nursery parents are concerned over day-to-day communication about their children's progress. Children become thoroughly involved when working in groups, and they contribute enthusiastically in class activities such as those to develop speaking and counting skills. Good use is made of indoor and outdoor facilities. Carefully maintained records and photographs show how, by the time they leave the Reception class, children thrive and make good progress. They make particularly good progress in their personal development and in their mathematical development where standards are broadly as expected. In other areas of learning they also make good progress although their ability levels, especially in communication, language and literacy development, remain below that typical of many children of this age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Consolidate approaches to raise standards in writing.
- Improve communication with parents of children in the Nursery.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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?	1
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

16 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Monkton Infants' School, South Tyneside, NE34 9SD

I really enjoyed my inspection of your school recently. Thank you for helping me when I came into your classrooms to see you at work. I did enjoy talking with some of you. You were well behaved and very polite, and really helpful. I was pleased to see how much you enjoy coming to school and taking part in all the different activities. I was impressed with the many ways you contribute to school life, such as through your school council, as monitors and buddies, and as members of the 'Eco Club'. I know your headteacher and all the staff are rightly very proud of you.

Yours is a good school. It is very welcoming and very well organised. All the adults in the school look after you well. I know that you feel safe. Your lessons are good. I was pleased with the way you work hard and like to take part in lessons and other school activities. Children in the Nursery and Reception make good progress. Those of you in Years 1 and 2 make excellent progress in your work. Last year, most pupils who were in Year 2 did very well in the tests everyone has to take. These excellent results were the same as in previous years. I was especially pleased to see that pupils who get extra help did well.

This year, I am pleased to say Year 2 pupils are on course to do really well. I am especially pleased with the very good progress everyone has made in writing, and especially the boys. Next year the school will continue to help you to do even better by supporting each of you to meet your targets. I asked your parents for their thoughts on how well you are doing. Most are very pleased with your progress but some parents of children in the Nursery would like more information. The school will improve the way it lets parents of Nursery children know how well they are doing.

You have very many opportunities at Monkton Infant School to learn about life and these should stand you in good stead for the future. I hope that you all do really well.

Yours sincerely

Graeme Clarke

Lead inspector