

Monkton Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108683
Local Authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	324814
Inspection dates	23–24 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Andrew Scott

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	179
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr. Michael Clare
Headteacher	Mr Stuart Johnson
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2005
School address	Dame Flora Robson Avenue South Shields Tyne and Wear NE34 9RD
Telephone number	0191 4240200
Fax number	0191 4240201

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is slightly smaller than most primary schools. It is situated in an urban area of social and economic disadvantage. Almost all pupils are from White British families. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities tends to be average, although it is slightly lower this year.

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, where pupils work hard and achieve well. Good leadership and quality of care ensure that the school has a warm, positive atmosphere where pupils feel safe and enjoy all aspects of school life. Parents are very appreciative of the progress that their children make and of the approachability of staff if they have any concerns. Parental questionnaire responses contained many similar plaudits. One parent described the entire staff as 'a wonderful group of people'. Another said that her 'son has come on leaps and bounds since starting at the school'.

The school has done well to establish and maintain above average standards overall, with high standards in mathematics and science. Standards in English have tended to be a little lower but have remained above average over recent years. They dropped a little in 2008, partly because of the different abilities within the year group. The school knows that writing has been an issue, especially for boys, but is improving matters through more stimulating resources. However, the teaching of English is not routinely enriched by other subjects for pupils to strengthen their command of the language.

Teaching is good overall. Its quality ranges from satisfactory to outstanding, and the leadership could do more to strengthen its consistency. Nevertheless, pupils do make good progress because of the high expectations of most teachers and a clear focus on acquiring basic skills. During the inspection, for example, pupils were eager to practise their multiplication tables, even during break times. In lessons, teachers' subject knowledge and energy motivate pupils well and learning is often swift. Such pace is less apparent in some lessons, and pupils are not always clear about what they should be learning. In addition, some activities do not inspire pupils to do their best. The curriculum is good with strengths in mathematics and science, and for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school is gradually diversifying the curriculum but this is taking some time to influence learning fully.

Pupils' personal development is good. They concentrate hard in lessons, because they respect the teachers and, indeed, other pupils. They behave well and look after one another around school. They are generally responsible about leading a healthy lifestyle and would like more sport and other clubs after school, a feeling echoed by their parents. Attendance is slightly below average; the school is working hard to discourage parents from taking term-time holidays. Pupils develop well socially and develop good self-esteem. Within school they learn how to be good citizens, but links with the wider community and knowledge of the diverse cultures in modern Britain are underdeveloped. Overall though, they are well prepared for life ahead.

The school is well led and managed especially by the headteacher. His measured approach and shrewd understanding of how the school is doing ensures that staff work cohesively and that priorities for improvement are appropriate. All senior staff regularly monitor their areas of responsibility but do not always analyse their findings enough to ensure that the impact of their actions brings about necessary improvements. As a result, school improvement is not as rapid as it might be. Governors are very supportive but do not hold the school to account with sufficient rigour. Overall, however, the school is in good shape and well placed to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure greater rigour in the monitoring of the school's development and the impact of actions taken by all levels of management.
- Improve pupils' awareness of the local community and wider world.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good and standards are above average. When pupils begin school, their attainment until recently has been broadly average. Increasingly, pupils are now entering Year 3 at above average levels. They make good progress by Year 6, especially in mathematics and science. Since the last inspection, standards in these two subjects have been high, and results in 2008 are much the same. Nearly all pupils reach the expected level and most attain the higher level. Standards in English have been above average but slipped a little this year. This was partly because of the different abilities within the year group. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities usually achieve well as measured against their capabilities. The school has successfully introduced good strategies to improve writing throughout the school, especially to address the comparative weakness in boys' writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy school and are very positive about everything it does for them. For example, they like the weekly house group meetings when they work together across the year groups. They sing lustily in assemblies and older pupils readily take on additional responsibilities, such as playground buddies. Lonely pupils are rarely lonely for long. Pupils rightly feel safe and know how to deal with bullying, although such incidents are rare.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Their behaviour is good and they have positive attitudes to learning, even when lessons are not very interesting. Their cultural development is satisfactory; they are not sufficiently aware of the multi-cultural nature of the outside world. Attendance is slightly below national levels but broadly satisfactory. Most pupils attend well but too many go on holiday during term-time.

Pupils understand the need for regular exercise and a healthy diet. They have the opportunity to make well informed choices from the good healthy school lunches, although they do not always do so. The school council is effective; for example, it has been instrumental in setting up a school garden and introducing bottles of drinking water. The school acknowledges that pupils need to develop further links with the local community. Overall, good social and academic skills mean that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. As a result, most pupils make good progress and develop positive attitudes to work. In all lessons, relationships are good and so produce a relaxed, focused atmosphere. Classroom assistants successfully support pupils' learning through gentle prompts and positive feedback. The quality of teaching is variable. In most lessons, assessment

is used skilfully to match work to pupils' individual needs. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects and present lively topics with high expectations. For example, the trials and tribulations of a black British footballer in the early 1900s captivated pupils' interest in the Year 6 English lessons seen, and rapidly improved their use of language. Such lessons are pacy and exciting. At times, though, the pace of learning is more modest because work is not always appropriately challenging or interesting enough. The school's leadership is not rigorous enough in checking that teachers' planning routinely reflects what is expected from pupils of different abilities, and so ensure consistency.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's curriculum has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Concerns about the entitlement of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have been addressed. Sensitive provision for these pupils within lessons enables them to gain confidence and make good progress.

A strong focus on key skills in literacy and numeracy, as well as on investigative skills in science, produces good standards. A recent emphasis to diversify the curriculum by linking subjects together is taking some time to become fully effective. The school does not yet enrich the English curriculum similarly to boost standards, including the development of the library. Useful activities outside lessons expand on work in lessons, but pupils and parents would like more clubs after school. The school provides well for pupils' social development and sense of citizenship within the school community. Pupils develop tolerance and an awareness of others' needs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents are unanimous in their view that the school takes good care of its pupils. Pupils are supervised well and their personal needs are effectively met because staff know their individual needs and have positive relationships. The safeguarding of pupils, child protection procedures and risk assessments are in place. Systems to support pupils when they need help are well established and effective, for example, in the early identification of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Academic guidance is good. For the most part, clear verbal and written feedback directs pupils in their next steps of learning. Sometimes, pupils are not wholly clear about what they have to do to improve their work. The school does well to involve parents in their children's learning, especially through homework.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a clear overview of the school, and understands the needs of staff, pupils and their families. Together, with senior staff, he has maintained the positive and welcoming atmosphere of the school that parents so appreciate. As a result, pupils develop into well-rounded individuals and achieve well.

The school, and in particular the headteacher, is well aware of its strengths and areas to improve through regular self-evaluation. From this, the school establishes good priorities shared by all staff. Nevertheless, analyses of all perceived shortcomings are not sufficiently detailed to guarantee success in a reasonable timescale. For example, suggestions to improve attendance are perfectly sensible but do not necessarily address the root causes. Governors are very supportive of the school, and have been active in discussions about a proposed merger with other schools. However, they are not knowledgeable enough about the school and do not hold it to account with enough rigour.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which 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	3
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 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?	2

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

25 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Monkton Junior School, South Tyneside, NE34 9RD

I am writing to thank you for the part you played in the recent inspection of your school. I enjoyed meeting you and getting to know your school. Your comments and opinions were very important and helped me to understand your school that bit better.

I agree with you that Monkton Juniors is a good school. You achieve well and you should be proud of your standards, especially in mathematics and science. Your standards in English are not quite so good but are still better than those found in many schools, and I know that you have been working hard with your teachers to improve them. Your teachers do a good job. They expect great things from you and, in many lessons, interesting and lively activities motivate you to work hard and take a pride in your work. Sometimes, work in lessons is not very exciting and it is to your credit that you maintain good concentration. The school is already making your curriculum more interesting but there is still some way to go.

I think that you develop really well as individuals. You learn to enjoy work, behave well and are respectful to everyone else in the school. You clearly want to lead a healthy lifestyle and I understand why you want extra sports and other activities after school. Although most of you attend school well, not all of you do; it is important that you come as much as you can. You develop good social skills at school. I have asked the school to make sure that you learn more about the outside world, including the many different cultures that exist in modern Britain and beyond. Overall, though, you are well prepared for your next school.

The good work by the headteacher and all the staff ensure that the school is a safe place and that it is developing well. They have the right ideas to make the school even better, and they certainly value your input. Even so, the school is going to look closely at some of the changes to see that they are bringing about improvement as quickly as possible. You have every right to be proud of your school and we are sure that you will continue to work hard and contribute to your school's improvement. I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Scott

Lead inspector