

# Our Lady Star of the Sea Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Thorpe Road, Horden, Peterlee, County Durham, SR8 4AB

## Inspection dates

3–4 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement.

- Achievement requires improvement. Standards at the end of Year 6 were below average in 2012 and 2103. Pupils had not made the progress expected of them in Key Stage 2.
- The quality of teaching is variable and requires improvement. It has not been good enough over time to ensure that pupils make good progress.
- The least-able pupils are given too few chances to practise their writing in English.
- Pupils are given too few chances to apply their skills in mathematics.
- Work in lessons is not always well matched to the level at which individual pupils are working.
- In some instances, when teachers mark work, they do not give clear advice about how pupils can improve their work or time to act upon that advice.

### The school has the following strengths

- Much good teaching was seen during the inspection, especially in writing and in the classes for the oldest and youngest children. As a result, pupils' progress is becoming more rapid.
- Behaviour is good and has improved significantly in the past two years. As a result, pupils feel extremely safe in school. Their attendance has improved.
- The school offers pupils an exciting curriculum and many interesting opportunities to promote their well-developed spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.
- The school offers highly effective care and support to pupils and their families.
- The excellent leadership of the headteacher has inspired new leaders of subject development teams. As a result, teaching has improved and pupils' progress has accelerated.
- The headteacher and the governing body are committed to improving the school and have tackled weak teaching.
- They have a clear understanding of what needs to be done further, based on a clear understanding of data and how to improve teaching.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector held meetings with staff, groups of pupils and the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor. The inspectors also met with the school's local authority education development adviser.
- The inspector looked at a range of evidence including the school's improvement plan, the school's data relating to pupils' progress, the work in pupils' books and the school's documentation relating to safeguarding.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning in seven lessons taught by four teachers and made a number of short visits to lessons. In addition, the inspector listened to a group of pupils in Year 2 read.
- The inspector conducted four observations jointly with the headteacher. The inspector also observed the headteacher reporting back to the teachers on her findings regarding the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' achievement in the lesson.
- Too few parents had responded to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) for their opinions to be published. However, the inspector met with a group of parents to hear their views about the school.
- Thirteen staff completed questionnaires and the responses were analysed.

## Inspection team

Gordon Potter, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is very much smaller than the average sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are White British. There is a very small proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is well-below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well-above average.
- There is a breakfast club, and lunch-time and after-school clubs which are managed by the governing body and run by school staff and external coaches.
- The school did not meet the government's current floor standards in 2012 and 2013. These are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- There are four classes for pupils in Reception and Year 1; Years 1 and 2; Years 3 and 4; Years 5 and 6.
- The headteacher is also headteacher of another local school. She divides her time between the two schools.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better, to further raise standards and rates of pupils' progress, by:
  - using teachers' understanding of the level at which pupils are working to plan work that is specifically linked to the skills and abilities of individual pupils
  - improving consistency in the quality of marking so that pupils know clearly how to make their work better and have time to act upon advice given to them by their teachers
  - offering pupils even more opportunities to apply their skills in mathematics in real-life, problem-solving activities that have more than one solution
  - offering the least able pupils more opportunities to practise their writing skills.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- From starting points that are typically well-below the expectations for their age, especially in speaking and listening, reading and writing, children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1.
- Teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. As a result, a higher proportion of pupils than is the case nationally had a good level of development when they left the Reception class in 2013. Attainment at the end of Year 2 has risen in writing and mathematics and is slightly below average.
- While pupils are confident readers, because they know how sounds and letters link together, their attainment in reading at the end of Year 2 is below average because they still have some gaps in their comprehension skills.
- In 2011, attainment at the end of Year 6 was slightly above average in English and mathematics. However, in 2012 and 2013, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was well below average and pupils had made inadequate progress because the progress they had made was not built upon in Years 5 and 6.
- The school has introduced successful initiatives to improve the quality of teaching in Years 5 and 6, including the redeployment of the teacher who had taught the class for pupils in Year 3 and 4 over the past two years. Pupils have benefited from good teaching. As a result, most pupils currently in Key Stage 2 have attainment which is broadly in line with the expectations for their age. Pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to achieve standards that are in line with national averages for English and mathematics.
- More pupils than has been the case in recent years are on track to attain standards which are above age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 6. This is because the school is now successfully identifying the most able pupils and encouraging them to attain highly.
- Pupils who were known to be eligible for free school meals and the pupil premium funding had attainment which was in line with other pupils in the school at the end of Year 6 in 2012 and 2013 in writing and mathematics. In reading, they were one year behind. The school knows that attainment for all groups of pupils was well below where it should be and has taken robust action to ensure that standards are rising for the current Year 6.
- Likewise, pupils with special educational needs who took the national assessment tests in 2013 had attainment which was below that of similar pupils nationally. Teaching in Year 6 is now much more closely focused on the needs of pupils with special educational needs and they are well taught and supported by their teacher and the teaching assistant.
- The very few pupils who speak English as an additional language have made excellent progress as a result of the clearly targeted support and teaching they receive and their own strong desire to succeed.
- The school is committed to the well-being of all groups of pupils and has a clear desire to promote equal opportunities and to tackle discrimination, but this desire has not yet ensured that all pupils make rapid and sustained progress and attain the highest standards.
- Inspection evidence shows that progress in reading is now good. There is a consistent focus on reading across the school. Pupils have a clear understanding of how letters are linked to sounds and this helps them to read unfamiliar words. Pupils say that improvements to the teaching of reading, more exciting books and using books as a stimulus for their own writing, have encouraged them to read more often and with greater enjoyment in school. They also read regularly at home.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is variable. Much is good, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage and for pupils in Years 5 and 6. Indeed, all teachers, as was evident in lesson observations and

scrutiny of work, are capable of good teaching. However, they do not always plan work that is matched closely enough to the learning needs of individual pupils. As a result, some work lacks challenge for all groups of pupils and teachers do not react quickly enough to adapt work as lessons progress.

- For example, in writing lessons in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, some children and pupils do the same exercise for too long and opportunities are missed for them to extend their writing into sentences or paragraphs. Some of the least able pupils are asked to do low-level activities at the expense of developing their writing skills. Therefore, while progress is becoming more rapid, it is not yet sustained enough for pupils to make consistently good progress.
- Books that contain pupils' written work show that they are beginning to make more rapid progress in writing. Occasionally, pupils spend too long improving one piece of writing at the expense of being allowed to develop their imagination and creativity in a range of genres.
- Where teaching is good, teachers make lessons interesting. They use exciting topics, move learning along at a brisk pace and allow pupils the chance to investigate together and give them the time to concentrate on solving problems. In a mathematics lesson for pupils in Year 5 and 6, for example, the teacher allowed pupils time to tackle a range of problems regarding area. Pupils were engaged by the tasks and made good progress in their learning.
- However, even in this lesson where there was good teaching, the teacher under-estimated the abilities of the pupils and offered too much help before the pupils carried out the activities. The curriculum offers too few opportunities for pupils to practise their mathematics skills in real-life, problem-solving activities in this way.
- Pupils' work is regularly marked but teachers do not always give clear advice about how to improve their work or time to act upon any advice given. Pupils know the level of their work, although they are less clear about how their targets help them to reach the next level.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils, staff and parents say that behaviour has improved significantly in the last two years. This is as a result of the headteacher having set clear expectations for how pupils should behave in lessons and around the school. There are clear rules which pupils help to draw up at the start of each year and teachers consistently apply a fair system of rewards and sanctions.
- Indeed, good behaviour was evident in lessons during the inspection. In lessons where pupils were fully engaged in their work, their behaviour was outstanding. Any minor misbehaviour, such as some distractions when the pace of learning drops, is quickly dealt with by teachers.
- The needs of a very small number of pupils who have significant behavioural difficulties are very well managed by the school. While the school has used fixed-term exclusions when necessary, these are few in number and their use has decreased. Pupils feel very safe and are aware of different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying or racism. They say that there is no bullying. If any minor problems occur, pupils are able to solve them between themselves.
- Good behaviour is also a result of the outstanding, sensitive care pupils receive from adults in the school, including the Parent Support Adviser, who has made a significant contribution to improvements in behaviour and attendance. These improvements are also the result of the school's determination to involve parents more in their children's education.
- Clear initiatives introduced by the school to encourage pupils to attend regularly and on time have been successful. Attendance has improved and this term is above average. It has also improved because pupils are comfortable in school. Because behaviour has improved, they are more involved in their learning, enjoy their lessons more and take pride in their work and its presentation. They are excited by the many interesting topics they learn about and enjoy school.
- Pupils are very polite to adults, extremely keen to talk about their school, respect one another and work and play well together. They develop social skills well through involvement in the breakfast, lunch-time and after-school clubs. The school council organises the play leaders scheme, offers ideas to improve the playground and has helped to develop the school garden.

## **The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher has had a significant impact on improving the school. Pupils' behaviour and attendance have improved. The quality of teaching and the rates at which pupils make progress have improved and attainment is rising across the school. Robust actions have improved teaching and progress in upper Key Stage 2, although they have not yet had time to raise attainment at the end of Year 6. She has encouraged the involvement of parents in the life of the school and she is highly respected by them.
- She has very high aspirations and expectations of staff and pupils and an extremely clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas where it still needs to improve. She offers highly effective leadership and has created teams, under the clear leadership of individual teachers, to develop the curriculum and to improve the quality of teaching in English and mathematics.
- Teachers have willingly welcomed this accountability and responsibility alongside curriculum responsibilities in other subjects. The assistant headteacher is an effective leader and manages the school very capably in the absence of the headteacher.
- The training of teachers is well managed through links with the headteacher's other school, through in-school training and the involvement of the local authority. This is effectively organised and has been successful in improving teaching and the curriculum.
- The headteacher has clear expertise in using data to measure pupils' progress. The school improvement plan has appropriate areas for development and clear processes to check that it is having the desired impact. While measures for pupils' progress are rigorous, they are not yet specific enough.
- Performance management targets for teachers are equally rigorous. The headteacher has made it very clear that they will only be rewarded when their pupils have done as well as, or better than, they should have done. These targets have not yet had time to ensure that progress is consistently good.
- The headteacher regularly monitors the quality of teaching, clearly understands what constitutes good teaching and judges it accurately. She is extremely clear in her feedback to teachers who respect and welcome her advice and act upon it. As a result, teaching across the school has improved.
- Funding to support the learning of those pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium has been used to provide additional staffing to offer support to develop their basic skills. It has also been used to purchase information and communication technology packages and homework packs which have helped pupils succeed in their homework. It is also used to offer pupils cultural opportunities through visits and extra-curricular activities. As a result, their progress is becoming more rapid.
- The new Primary School Sports funding has been used effectively to develop competitive sports and festivals with other primary schools and to enhance sporting links with the local college. It has been used to introduce new sports to the school, such as rugby and martial arts. This is allied to the good teaching of physical education and all are contributing well to pupils' physical development and well-being.
- The curriculum is exciting and contributes strongly to pupils' well-developed spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. While it is focused on developing pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics, it also provides very many opportunities for pupils to develop their love of history, art, music, science and Spanish. It is particularly good at helping pupils to see the links between subjects and to practise their writing skills in all subjects, but particularly in history and religious education. However, it offers too few opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills and this slows progress.
- The school welcomes the support and advice it receives from the local authority and its education development advisers who have helped the school to improve the quality of teaching. Managers also welcome the clear advice they have received in personnel and legal issues.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- In the past two years, the governing body has offered highly effective support and rigorous challenge to the school. It has made a telling contribution to the school's improvement, particularly through its determined tackling of weak teaching. The Chair of the Governing Body offers excellent leadership and all governors are very knowledgeable about the school. They have clear systems to monitor the achievement of pupils, the quality of teaching and the curriculum and teachers' performance management. Governors receive clear information about how the pupil premium funding and the new Primary School Sports funding are allocated and are very knowledgeable about their impact. They ensure that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities for safeguarding. All staff have been vetted and are trained appropriately to keep pupils safe and free from harm. The budget in this very small school is extremely well managed.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114281
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	425805

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	100
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Carol Scott
<b>Headteacher</b>	Joanne Jones
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 September 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 586 3895
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