

Marine Park First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108589
Local Authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	288134
Inspection date	28 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Andrew Scott

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	500
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	
Headteacher	Mrs Vera Murphy
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2001
School address	Park Road Whitley Bay Tyne and Wear NE26 1LT
Telephone number	0191 2008723
Fax number	0191 2008724

Age group	3–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This very large first school is situated close to the centre of Whitley Bay. Pupils come predominantly from White British families; there is a small minority of pupils who speak English as their second language, mainly from Bangladeshi families. Socio-economic conditions in the locality are broadly average but pupils come from a much wider area. The pupil population is fairly stable, although a few pupils attend school for the limited time they are staying in the town. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is low. The school has a settled staff and is currently over-subscribed; it moved into a new building in 2004. It operates wraparound child care provision.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Marine First School is an outstanding school. It has an excellent record of high academic achievement and it provides first-rate personal development for pupils. The school has a very welcoming and inspiring atmosphere that pervades all corners of its bright and capacious new building. Although it is a very large school, there is a great sense of togetherness and that every child really does matter. Pupils fully appreciate the mantle of care that protects and nurtures them. Parents agree. 'We couldn't be happier with the school,' said one.

Pupils thrive here. They are mature, reflective, very considerate of one another and very respectful towards adults. Their behaviour is hard to fault. They are eager to pursue a safe and healthy lifestyle and take full advantage of all opportunities for sport. Pupils are integral to the school's development with input from a large school forum as well as a school council. Pupils benefit from links outside the school; such as, by performing in the adjacent theatre. Overall, they are extremely well prepared for the next phase of their education.

Standards are consistently high and the achievement of all pupils is outstanding because of excellent teaching. Children tend to enter the Nursery with average skills and abilities and make swift progress. By the end of the Reception year, they mostly exceed national expectations and the picture is repeated by the end of Years 2 and 4. Pupils not only excel in English and mathematics, high quality artwork and well-developed computer skills also indicate a good range of competences.

In each classroom, there is a relaxed atmosphere and a great sense of purpose. Teachers match work skilfully to pupils' varying abilities, whatever their individual needs, offer excellent guidance and give each pupil motivational targets. New learning is explained very clearly, so pupils readily understand, start their work without delay and sustain concentration. Their self-reliance is admirable. The first-rate curriculum is extensive, rich and inclusive of all pupils.

The leadership of the school is outstanding. The headteacher's enlightened, firm but caring approach and her emphasis on professional development have resulted in staff of high calibre that work fruitfully and cohesively at all levels. The school knows itself extremely well and so establishes astute priorities for further improvement. Excellent financial planning supports this. Parents hold the school in high regard. One wrote, 'Teaching staff always have time to engage with you.' Governance is undergoing a transitional phase with several new governors but is good overall. In view of its outstanding provision, the school offers excellent value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

There are no significant areas for improvement

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding throughout the school. Children enter school with skills and abilities that are broadly average and make excellent progress through each key stage. By the end of the Reception year, most pupils exceed the goals expected nationally of five-year-olds. By Year 2, standards have been consistently above the national averages for many years and, as indicated by the school's data, pupils are on track to achieve similar results this year. By Year 4, pupils' attainment strengthens and is consistently high; indications are just as positive in the current Year 4.

Pupils perform equally well in English and mathematics. The high quality of pupils' work in the arts and good computer skills show that their skills are broad based. The inclusive approach by the school means that all the different needs of pupils are fully met.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are a credit to the school and their parents. Their personal development and well-being are outstanding. The excellent relationships throughout the school mean that pupils are highly respectful to staff and to one another. Pupils behave extremely well; they say that behaviour is not perfect but it is as good as it gets. This generates excellent attitudes to work and the virtual redundancy of playground buddies who have little to do. Social skills are extremely well developed so that cooperation in class and self-motivation are exemplary. The beautiful and diverse artwork that enlivens the school typifies the quality of cultural opportunities that pupils readily seize. Spirituality is the life-blood of the school resulting, for example, in high self-esteem among the pupils. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

Attendance is consistently above average, and reflects the pleasure pupils have in being at school. Pupils are very well tuned into a healthy lifestyle, and clearly understand that diet needs to be balanced and that exercise should be regular. Pupils have a strong voice in school through a variety of channels; for example, in occasional assemblies when literally whole school decisions vividly illustrate the virtues of democracy. All in all, therefore, pupils' preparation for the future is excellent.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

There are numerous reasons why teaching and learning are outstanding. There is clarity of purpose in the classrooms that makes learning so straightforward – clarity in the learning objectives, in the teachers' explanations and demonstrations, and in their high expectations. Consequently, pupils are absolutely clear about what to do, how to do it and also clear that they should produce work of high quality. Each classroom has an uplifting atmosphere – one where every pupil matters, every opinion is valued and every effort is rewarded subtly. It is no surprise that pupils respond enthusiastically, work very happily and take pride in their work.

Teachers make shrewd use of their assessment of pupils' learning to provide work for each pupil with just the right level of challenge for their abilities - demanding but achievable. Pupils appreciate the sensitive support and advice given by all adults, including the marking of their work. They respond by sustaining an excellent pace of intense and focused learning. Teachers make full use of resources to stimulate and reinforce learning. The interactive whiteboards are used especially well to demonstrate new concepts.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school has an excellent curriculum. Its strong framework ensures that learning is well structured but teachers adapt it imaginatively. They also enable all pupils to benefit equally, regardless of different needs, cultures and languages. The curriculum is neatly adapted; for

example, to motivate more able pupils and enable them to work at their own pace. Indeed, the breadth and range of the curriculum are motivational in themselves.

The very healthy focus on literacy and numeracy is not at the expense of other subjects. Subjects are wisely linked to develop basic skills and knowledge and put learning in context. Enrichment does not just comprise of activities added to the school day; it permeates everyday learning. Links with other organisations provide excellent scope for such activities as drama and coastal surveys. The new building is magnificent; the beautiful displays are a delightful garnish.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for its pupils. Systems for safeguarding pupils are rigorous and up to date. Risk assessments are regular and efficient, and enabled quick identification of some teething problems with the new building. First-aid provision is excellent because all staff are kept up to date through regular training. Pastoral care is intrinsic and second nature. Despite the size of the school, pupils feel very secure and valued individually. It is a warm, friendly and secure place for pupils to be.

Academic guidance is very good. The systems to monitor pupils' progress are comprehensive and pinpoint issues like potential underachievement. Pupils' learning targets in English and mathematics are excellent because they are tailored for pupils individually and are constantly appraised and adjusted, as appropriate.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher is an excellent leader with considerable expertise. She combines good old-fashioned values with innovative ideas to champion academic and personal achievement. She is very clear-sighted, perceptive and decisive. She is also highly skilled at recognising potential and strengths in staff and promoting their professional development. As a result, there is a highly effective management structure at all levels. All senior staff play a significant part in the school's success.

The school's self-evaluation is outstanding – shrewd, pervasive and accurate.

Development planning is excellent as a result. The school does not automatically accept new initiatives, but is thoroughly reflective before deciding future actions. It constantly questions itself and strives to improve. Governance is going through a period of change with several new governors, but it is good. Governors monitor the school well and are fully involved in decision-making.

Parents think very highly of the school. One parent echoed the views of many by stating, 'The school's values are everything we could have wished for'. A small minority considers that communication with the school sometimes falls short of their expectations but the inspection found that communication did not represent a significant issue. The school has built admirably on the strengths of the last inspection and has made excellent progress since then. It has, therefore, outstanding capacity to improve further.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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?	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	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?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

29 March 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Marine Park First School, Tyne and Wear, NE26 1LT

I am writing to thank you for the part you played in the inspection of your school. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting you all and my conversations with you were a great help to me in getting to know your school in a short space of time.

I think you have an excellent school. You have a splendid new building but, of course, school is about much more than that. You should be very proud of the excellent progress you make in your work that helps you to reach high standards year after year. This is because you have excellent teachers and an exciting curriculum, but also because you are so sensible and hard-working yourselves. You clearly enjoy school and take a pride in your work. Your wonderful artwork says it all.

You are right to feel safe and extremely well cared for in school. Each of you is very important to all the adults and I know you appreciate their advice and support. You all contribute to the excellent atmosphere. For example, your behaviour is outstanding and you get on together impressively. I just feel sorry for the playground buddies who have so little work to do. You are really well prepared for your next school.

I know you will miss your headteacher. A headteacher who welcomes an inspection just days before her retirement is a special person! She has made your school what it is and I am sure you are very proud of her achievements. She and all the other staff work very hard and are constantly thinking of good ideas to improve your school. I have no doubt that you will continue to help them as you usually do, by responding so enthusiastically in class and around the school.

I wish you every success for the future,

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Scott

School inspector