

Star of the Sea Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108622
Local Authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	324806
Inspection dates	19–20 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Margaret Armstrong

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	431
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Marie Rooney
Headteacher	Mr Michael Willcock
Date of previous school inspection	15 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Seatonville Road Whitley Bay Tyne and Wear NE25 9EG
Telephone number	0191 2008728

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	19–20 March 2009
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Fax number

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized school which serves pupils from a wide area around this seaside town. The large majority of pupils are from White British families and the remainder are from a range of minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils learning English as an additional language is higher than the national average. A very small number of pupils are looked after. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average as is the percentage who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The Early Years and Foundation Stage comprise a Nursery and two Reception classes. The school provides breakfast and after school clubs. It holds the Activemark and Healthy and International School awards. The school has undergone significant change since the last inspection including the completion of an extensive building programme and the addition of Nursery provision.

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. It has outstanding features. Its strong Christian values and high expectations enable pupils to flourish in their personal development and academic achievement. The headteacher, ably supported by the newly formed leadership team, gives a clear educational direction to the school's work. As a result, this very inclusive school makes an outstanding contribution to community cohesion. This can be seen in the way the school forges very effective partnerships with parents and external agencies, to support children's development and well-being. Links with international communities are exemplary. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and speak in glowing terms about the, 'warm, nurturing atmosphere' where children gain, 'a very secure building block in education'.

Children enter the Nursery with a range of skills which overall are below what could be expected for their age. The good provision in the Early Years and Foundation Stage means children quickly become confident learners and achieve well. Pupils continue to make good progress as they move through the school and, by the time pupils leave Year 6, standards are above average. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive high quality support and achieve well.

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. Relationships are excellent and, as a result, pupils are very well behaved and show very mature attitudes to learning. The weekly 'Statement of Belief' is a key feature which helps pupils feel part of the school community. All pupils have a very secure understanding of how to stay healthy and safe. They contribute very well to the school community through their involvement in fundraising for a wide range of charities and through their high level of participation in the Music Theatre Club. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and this is best summed up in the words of one pupil who reported 'I really enjoy learning and making friends'. Their good learning, along with the school's very strong emphasis on personal development, ensures they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Teaching and learning are good. There are some outstanding features. This promotes good achievement for all pupils. Relationships are excellent and lessons are interesting, therefore pupils work hard and enjoy learning. However, teachers do not always make sufficient use of assessment information to monitor progress and identify exactly what pupils need to do to move on in their learning. Pupils respond well to the lively, creative curriculum which excites and motivates them. They participate fully in the extensive range of high quality activities that are available both inside and outside of lesson time.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher leads and manages his staff well. As a result, teachers and support staff work well together as a team and this has resulted in an outstanding level of care and support for vulnerable pupils. Governors are forward thinking and they support the school well through new initiatives. Consequently, the school has made good progress in improving provision for information and communication technology (ICT) since the last inspection. The school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start because the provision is good. Their personal development is outstanding. Children quickly develop into confident, articulate individuals who learn to

concentrate and enjoy learning. Parents are very pleased with the start their children make. They comment very favourably on the 'Look what I can do!' books which keep them well informed about the progress their children make. Children are very well cared for and the school fulfils all welfare requirements. Staff work and plan effectively as a team to provide high quality learning experiences, both inside and outside the classroom, which make learning fun. Adults make regular observations and assessments to plan the next steps of learning for each individual. As a result, there is a good balance between adult-led activities and those from which children can choose. Consequently, children make good progress in relation to their starting points which are generally below what is typical for their age. By the end of Reception children mostly achieve average standards, although this can vary some years. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because of the very effective adult support. Leadership and management are good and there are comprehensive plans in place to develop outdoor provision further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that assessment systems are used consistently to monitor pupils' progress and inform pupils about what they need to do to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and pupils achieve well. Standards vary year-on-year because of the differing ability profiles of the intakes and increasing levels of mobility. In 2008 standards were average for Year 2 pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents good progress from this group's point of entry to Year 1. Pupils in Year 6 made good progress to reach above average standards. A key factor in the school's success has been the well-planned use of 'Targeted Support' which has resulted in pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those from minority ethnic groups and looked after children making good progress. Pupils who have English as an additional language are very well supported so they soon play an active part in lessons and achieve well. Over the past year the school has made raising standards in writing a priority for development. As a result of action taken, standards are rising because pupils are more skilled in writing for a range of purposes. Although there is some variation in the attainment of boys and girls there is no measurable pattern.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding, as is their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. Pupils take part wholeheartedly in physical activities. They act very responsibly and know how to keep themselves safe and they talk confidently about the importance of healthy eating. Pupils work very well together and their exemplary behaviour inside and outside is a clear reflection of the school's success in developing their social skills. Their love of school and enthusiasm for learning is seen in their good attendance. They are a credit to the school and are proud of their contributions to the community. For example, they act very responsibly as 'Buddies', serve on the school council and contribute positively to the parish communities. The work they have done to help the school maintain the Tidy School Award is an excellent example of their cooperative work. The good grounding pupils receive in their basic skills prepares them well for the next stage of learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. There is some outstanding teaching. Relationships are excellent and, as a result, pupils are keen to work hard and do their best. Pupils say they enjoy lessons and teachers work conscientiously to engage their interest and this promotes good learning. Teachers create a strong sense of security for pupils who willingly respond to challenging questioning. This gives them opportunities to show how well they are learning. Generally lessons are well planned and resources, including computer technology, used well to enrich learning. Where teaching is less effective, planning does not always build upon prior attainment. This is because teachers do not always make effective use of assessment information to plan for all ability groups. Teaching assistants are well trained and provide high quality, targeted support. This means pupils with learning difficulties and the increasing number with additional needs are able to play a full part in lessons and achieve well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It fully meets statutory requirements and responds well to the learning needs of pupils with a wide range of abilities. Outstanding provision is made to broaden pupils' awareness of the diverse cultural and religious aspects of the society they live in. For example, pupils talked excitedly about how much they enjoy linking with other schools in Ireland and Rwanda and taking part in special events such as the 'Dunkirk Carnival'. The curriculum is enriched through very strong partnerships with the wider community. These include visits from actors, and sports specialists, visits out of school to Robin Wood Activity Centre and Normandy and opportunities to participate in 'Other Faiths' weeks. Opportunities for learning beyond the classroom are good and pupils are very keen to attend the wide range of sporting and creative activities offered by the school. There is a systematic approach to the development of pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology resulting in good achievement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care and support are outstanding. Procedures for child protection, safeguarding, risk assessment and health and safety are fully in place. As a result, pupils feel safe and secure because they know an adult will help them if they have a problem. The very effective links with outside agencies ensure support for vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and looked after children, is excellent. Expectations for the behaviour of pupils are very high within a very caring environment in which all feel valued and supported. Induction arrangements are good and this helps pupils new to the school settle in quickly and feel part of the school community. Strong links with the local secondary school ensure a smooth transition as pupils move to the next stage of their education. Academic guidance is generally effective in identifying pupils who need extra support and the school regularly tracks pupils' progress across the school. Teachers do not always use this information well enough, however, to pinpoint exactly what pupils need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and newly established leadership team work together effectively and this has helped them develop a good team spirit in the school. As a result, the school has a good capacity to improve further. Self-evaluation procedures are comprehensive and ensure the school identifies the right priorities for development. Teaching and learning are monitored regularly and support is provided when required. This has resulted in the improved performance of higher attaining pupils in mathematics at the end of Year 6 because teaching has increased the level of challenge for these pupils. Senior leaders analyse data carefully and set challenging targets for improvement. They have not yet ensured pupil progress data is used consistently across the school. Governors know the school well and play a full part in its development. They have made certain there is a good range of resources to support pupils' learning. Excellent partnerships with parents, outside agencies and the local and global communities support the school's work and promote community cohesion extremely well.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	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?	1
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**

23 March 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Star of the Sea Roman Catholic Primary School, North Tyneside, NE25 9EG

I am writing to thank you for the part you played in the inspection of your school. We really enjoyed spending time with you and listening to your views about your school and why you enjoy learning.

Yours is a good school, and it is outstanding in the care and support and personal development it provides. We enjoyed visiting your classrooms and we were very pleased to see how hard you work with your teachers and other adults. Your work is good quality. That is because you are keen to learn and work hard. We were very impressed with your excellent behaviour and how well you take responsibility for looking after each other. Well done to the 'Buddies' and the playground monitors! You told us you really like the after school clubs, including Irish dancing, ceramics and gymnastics. Your school works very closely with outside groups like the Sports Partnership to make sure there are lots of interesting things for you to do.

We particularly liked the family atmosphere in your school and the Christian values that influence all you do. The headteacher and staff take very good care of you and they want you to feel safe and secure in school. Even though your school is good with many strengths the headteacher, staff and governors want to make it even better. We have suggested that your school uses information about your progress fully so it can tell you exactly what you need to do next to improve. You can help by always doing your best and continuing to involve yourselves in the life of the school.

Once again, thank you very much for your help and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Armstrong

Lead inspector