

Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Primary School, Lytham St Annes

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119627
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313363
Inspection date	12 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Gill Salter-Smith

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	225
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Margaret Sellick
Headteacher	Miss Jan Hornby
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2004
School address	Kenilworth Road St Annes Lytham St Annes Lancashire FY8 1LB
Telephone number	01253 726015
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the impact of the actions taken to improve the teaching and assessment of writing on the pupils' progress and achievement, especially of boys
- the validity of the school's judgement that personal development is outstanding, especially in terms of pupils' understanding of how to stay healthy and safe and awareness of other cultures
- whether the provision and progress in Reception is consistently outstanding.

Evidence was gathered from observing lessons, the dining area and the playground. Formal discussions were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the chair of governors and pupils. Parents' responses to the questionnaire were analysed and other school documents, including the school's self-evaluation form, were scrutinised. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This average sized school has more boys than girls compared to most schools. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. Of the small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups, a few do not have English as a first language and are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Our Lady Star of the Sea is an outstanding school. Under the excellent leadership of the headteacher, a highly committed team of staff and governors ensures that pupils are happy and secure in school, and that they achieve their best and become caring, sensitive young people. Parents are highly supportive of the school. They appreciate the high levels of care, support and guidance provided and the very strong Christian values it promotes. Many have found the school's website and the practical workshops on supporting literacy and numeracy very helpful. These supportive comments are typical of many parents: 'A brilliant all round education' and 'I have watched my son grow and blossom at this school' and 'This is a fantastic school, I have nothing but praise for their excellent standards and community spirit' and 'My daughter has loved everyday, coming home excited by what she has learnt.'

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils' prayers on the prayer board in the worship area reflect their care for each other and their families. Collective worship and class discussion help pupils to become more sensitive to their own and each others' feelings. Everybody has been thinking about 'changes' recently and a Year 6 pupil said that '... it has helped me to reflect and think about things more. It's helped me to feel more confident and happier about the future.' Excellent supportive relationships with adults help pupils to enjoy school a great deal. Pupils say that 'Everybody being happy and having a positive attitude helps you to learn.' Behaviour is excellent and attendance is well above average.

Pupils make a very strong contribution to the school and the wider community. The school council working closely with various community members helped to develop an environmental garden that everyone greatly enjoys. The Eco Warriors, a group of pupils keen to protect the environment, recycle materials wherever possible. Pupils have a good understanding of other cultures. They enjoy finding out about the festivals and ways of life of children from other cultures within the school, but opportunities to meet people from a wider range of cultures are more limited. The healthy choices pupils make at lunchtimes and their keenness to take part in the excellent range of sporting activities reflect their very secure understanding of how to stay healthy. Pupils are prepared extremely well for their futures. They become confident learners with very secure basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils respond exceptionally well to responsibilities such as playground pals, and Year 6 pupils enjoy the work experience they carry out, taking on their various roles within the school maturely and competently.

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. When pupils start school in the Reception class their skills and abilities are broadly typical for their age, though elements of literacy are weaker. They make outstanding progress throughout the school because of excellent teaching and an outstanding curriculum that includes much stimulating drama and inspiring visits and visitors. There is a real excitement and enjoyment of learning among pupils as a result. Pupils learn best when they work in-depth on a topic, for example on the life of Florence Nightingale, giving them the opportunity to practise basic skills in an interesting and meaningful context. This approach is not yet fully developed across all areas of the school.

By the time pupils reach Year 6, standards are very high and pupils meet the challenging targets that are set for them. Overall results in national tests for pupils in Year 6 and Year 2 have been significantly above average over the last five years. However, in recent years, results in writing

have not been quite as strong as in mathematics and science. The school has successfully improved writing further, especially for boys, and work seen in lessons and books shows high standards of writing. Pupils currently in Years 6 are on target to achieve even better standards than in some previous years. Pupils' achievement in ICT and physical education is particularly strong.

Outstanding teaching supports pupils' learning extremely well. Pupils rise to teachers' very high expectations. Pupils carry out tasks and research independently and think for themselves. Lively tasks and a rapid pace to lessons keep pupils on their toes and they say learning is fun. Rigorous assessment helps teachers to set challenging targets for individuals and to know which pupils need extra challenge or support. Teachers and teaching assistants support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language very effectively. Increasingly pupils recognise how to improve their own work and they are very supportive in helping each other in this process. Pupils find their individual targets that guide learning in writing very useful but these are mostly used during literacy lessons alone. Consequently, pupils are not as well focused as they could be on improving their writing by applying their skills to all subjects.

Outstanding leadership, management and governance have maintained high standards since the previous inspection. Very secure self-evaluation underpins the priorities identified and actions taken. Well focused professional development has supported improvements in the school. The requirement of staff to read and reflect on professional guidance helps staff to reflect on how they might develop and improve their own practice. Arrangements to ensure pupils are safeguarded meet requirements. There is no complacency and an excellent capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children make excellent progress in the Reception class because the teaching is outstanding. Most children meet or exceed the early learning goals expected by the time they leave the Reception class. Literacy skills are less strong than other areas of learning but children make very good progress from their starting points. The focus on improving children's understanding of letters and sounds is having a marked effect on improving their development in reading and writing. Children enjoy a wide range of relevant activities that they can choose for themselves. Staff make the most of these to develop communication and language skills. Staff set high expectations for children and activities directed by adults are challenging and well matched to individual needs. Children follow routines very well and enjoy tidying up speedily to music. Parents appreciate the high levels of care and support their children receive. The Reception class is very well managed. The staff work effectively as a team to provide high quality learning experiences and ensure that all children feel happy and secure.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase opportunities for pupils to practise writing in subjects across the curriculum, maintaining a clear focus on how they can improve their writing skills.

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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
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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	1
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**

13 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Primary School, Lancashire, FY8 1LB

Many thanks for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school. Please pass on my thanks to your parents or guardians for all their helpful comments in the questionnaires. You need to know what I found out about your school.

Our Lady Star of the Sea is an outstanding school. You are a real credit to your school. You are confident young people who enjoy school. Your behaviour is excellent. You are very sensitive to each other's feelings and care a great deal for each other. I was moved by the prayers you had written about your friends and families in the worship room. You take your responsibilities seriously and it was good to see the Year 6 pupils carrying out their work experience in school so maturely. The school council has certainly helped to produce a wonderful environmental garden that everybody enjoys. I was pleased to see so many of you keen to keep healthy and take part in the many extra sporting activities. Eco Warriors, carry on the good recycling work!

You are doing exceptionally well in your academic work because you are extremely well taught. I saw many examples of excellent writing, for example, the poems about the Resurrection written by Year 6 pupils were very well structured and showed a very good understanding of how to use poetry to express emotions. The drama work about Macbeth that I saw was riveting and I wished that I could have joined in.

Your headteacher, the staff and governors do an excellent job. They make sure that they know what is working well in the school and what needs to be even better. They have agreed that it would be helpful to you if there were more chances for you to practise your writing skills in lots of different subjects. Whilst you are doing this, you will need to be clear about how you can improve your writing, just like you do when you are writing in literacy lessons.

You can help by continuing to work hard and keeping up your excellent attendance. I do hope that you enjoy the rest of your time at Our Lady Star of the Sea. I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Gillian Salter-Smith

Lead inspector