



St Joseph's Catholic Infant School, Birtley

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108389
LEA Gateshead
Inspection number 277961
Inspection dates 26 September 2005 to 27 September 2005
Reporting inspector Margaret Shepherd

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Mitchell Street
School category	Voluntary aided		Birtley
Age range of pupils	4 to 7		Chester le Street, County Durham
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 4102324
Number on roll	75	Fax number	0191 4102324
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Father Tony Duffy
Date of previous inspection	20 June 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Valerie Gibson

Age group 4 to 7	Inspection dates 26 September 2005 - 27 September 2005	Inspection number 277961
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

St Joseph's Catholic Infants school serves the village of Birtley and is smaller than average. There are three single-age classes and the reception children attend full time for the whole school year. The first day of the inspection was also their first full day in school. There are fewer pupils with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LDD) than usual and only a small proportion of pupils whose first language is not English. At the time of the inspection the current seconded headteacher had only been in her role for three weeks. A class teacher had been acting headteacher for the two previous terms following the retirement of the long- serving permanent headteacher.

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. The school judges itself this way and the inspection agrees. It provides good value for money. Standards are higher than average by Year 2 and pupils achieve well. Personal development is outstanding. Pupils have a very good understanding of healthy living and safety, and thoroughly enjoy their work. Children settle into school very well in reception and make satisfactory progress overall, with good achievement in reading and very good achievement in personal development. Teaching is good. Whole-school curricular opportunities are outstanding. The focus of learning in the independent activities in reception and Year 1 is not organised systematically enough. Leadership and management are good despite the changes of headteacher. The school is keen to make its work even better. It has a good capacity to do this due to the dedication of the staff team and the vision of the new headteacher.

not applicable

What the school should do to improve further

- improve the quality of the independent activities in reception and Year 1;
- implement the planned self-evaluation processes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children make good progress and achieve well. When they enter the school, the spread of ability is wide and standards are average overall. The school sets itself challenging targets and has high expectations of the more able pupils. Standards in Year 2 are well above average. This year group are particularly good at imaginative writing. They confidently use phrases like "reptiles scuttling about," in their poems. Standards are good in music. The school is proud of the consistently good standards of the children when they leave the school. In reception children progress well in reading and make satisfactory progress overall.

The progress of children with specific learning needs is good. They achieve well in groupwork and contribute confidently to whole-class work activity. The whole class was thrilled when a pupil produced a rainbow using the interactive whiteboard in a computer lesson. Children whose first language is not English make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding feature of the school. It is very proud of this aspect of its work and the inspection agrees that this pride is justified. Relationships between children as well as with staff are excellent. Children in reception settle into school routines really quickly. They make very good progress in their personal, social and emotional

development. Throughout the school, children take a great pride in their work and thoroughly enjoy the wide range of opportunities offered to them. Their behaviour is excellent, whether it be in lessons, around the school or out in the playground. Parents are very pleased with how keen their children are to come to school.

Children have an excellent understanding of being a part of the family-like community of the whole school. Older children love looking after younger children and they have carefully planned opportunities to do this every week in the family-group time. Children really enjoy the stimulating visits into the community and the opportunities to take part in events like the whole-school productions and dance festivals. Attendance is satisfactory overall, with the great majority of pupils attending well.

Children's spiritual development is excellent. This shows in their involvement in regular prayers, their fascination in the very high-quality assemblies and the work they carry out in religious education. Children develop an excellent understanding of health and safety issues. Their posters identifying the skills of walking safely to school show this understanding very well. They are eager to explain such health issues as why eating fruit and vegetables is good for you. Children have a very good sense of right and wrong. They develop this systematically through topics covering issues like bullying or drugs awareness. Their cultural development is excellent.

Children develop excellent skills of self-confidence and working together in teams. They share and take turns, and make decisions confidently. They develop very good skills of literacy and numeracy. All of these skills prepare them extremely well for their future economic well being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good. Teachers work very closely with the high-quality classroom assistants. The organisation of support within the teaching teams meets the needs of children with specific learning difficulties well. The teaching of children whose first language is not English is good. Staff give them great encouragement in trying out new words to communicate. Teachers plan carefully to ensure that the more able pupils do challenging work. There is a strong emphasis on the development of basic skills, particularly in reading. The home-school reading records are high quality, and the daily organisation of reading books for parents to use every night with their children works very well. The staff manage behaviour extremely skillfully. Teachers' planning is thorough in literacy and numeracy, but in reception and Year 1, the planning for independent activities is not systematic enough to ensure the steady development of skills. Teachers use their interactive whiteboards imaginatively to develop learning in whole-class sessions. The Year 2 teacher has very high expectations of her children.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The organisation of whole-school curriculum initiatives is outstanding. A wide variety of different themes extends pupils' academic and personal learning. The Year 2 teacher, supported by all the staff, produces very high quality musical performances each year. They include every child in Year 2 and use their own ideas. This work is so good that the children's singing and the scripts and musical scores are sold commercially. The quality of the curriculum has been endorsed for the eleventh consecutive year in Healthy Schools Awards and two Activemark Gold Awards. The international links enrich the school's cultural curriculum extremely well. They also support the self-esteem of the children who come from one of these countries, and strengthen links with the parents of these children. The curriculum in reception provides well for personal, social and emotional development and for basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Opportunities are missed in independent activities to enrich the reception curriculum across its many different aspects. The school is working hard to ensure that children move smoothly from reception to the different Year 1 curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school places a very high emphasis on this aspect of its work. Staff consider safety issues very carefully and put in thorough systems to safeguard children. The level of care for individuals is high, both in lessons and around the school. The close links with parents ensure that children make good progress, which the parents appreciate.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the school are good. The new headteacher has a very clear vision of how to take the school forward by building on its current success. The co-ordinators form a strong and dedicated team and are enthusiastic about their own responsibilities. They carry heavy loads in terms of the number of subjects that they lead and they prioritise their time sensibly. The views of all staff and of children are clearly valued by the leadership team. The governors have a good understanding of the strengths and development issues of the school and have provided continuity between the different headteachers over the past year. They provide a good avenue for parents to raise any issues that they feel could be improved in the school.

Very good self-evaluation processes were in place with the permanent headteacher. The small size of the staff ensured that informal communication between the co-ordinators remained strong after she left. The focus on standards, personal development and a rich whole-school curriculum remained a priority for the school. Some of the monitoring carried out did not identify areas to develop and improve. The new headteacher, whilst recognising the current strengths of the school, is keen to improve the self evaluation systems even further in order to make the school's work

outstanding. She has clear plans to extend the involvement of all stakeholders in the process and to develop procedures to monitor, evaluate and improve the school's work.

The school worked hard to address the issues raised in the previous inspection and has resolved them very effectively. The outdoor play area was a weakness; it now provides very high quality equipment which children love to use. The capacity for further improvement is good because the current headteacher, the governors and the co-ordinators are all keen to work together to make the school's provision even better.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
T 0207 421 6800
F 0207 421 6707
www.ofsted.gov.uk

St Joseph's Catholic Infant School, Birtley
Mitchell Street
Birtley
Chester le Street
County Durham
DH3 1LU

28 September 2005

Dear children of St Joseph's Catholic Infants School,

Thank you very much for welcoming me into your school. I really enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work.

The best things about your school are :-

the wonderful way that you behave in your lessons, and how sensible you are when you walk around the school and play outdoors at breaktimes;

your enjoyment in lessons and the way that you work so hard;

the good work that you do, particularly the great ideas that you have when you write stories or poems;

the music that you make and the performances at the end of the summer term;

all the different things that you know about keeping safe and healthy,

the hard work you do with your teachers and your mums and dads and carers that helps you to learn to read;

the good teachers and the classroom assistants. You said you thought they were one of the best things about your school;

your headteacher and governors and the way they want to make your school even better.

One of the things that I have asked your school to do now is to help you learn more in reception and Year 1 when you are working on your own at activities around the classroom. The other thing is for your school to look at all the different things that they provide for you, and decide how to make them even better.

Best wishes,

Maggi Shepherd

(Lead inspector)

Annex B