

# St Joseph's Catholic Infant School, Birtley

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108389
<b>Local Authority</b>	Gateshead
<b>Inspection number</b>	324759
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 September 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Barbara Hudson

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	85
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Father Anthony Duffy
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Val Gibson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 September 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Mitchell Street Birtley Chester le Street County Durham DH3 1LU
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 4102324
<b>Fax number</b>	0191 4102324

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<b>Age group</b>	4–7
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

St Joseph's Catholic Infant School is much smaller than average. There are three single-age classes. The inspection took place in the second week of the new academic year and the Reception children had only attended school for one half day. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who are eligible for free school meals are below average. A small number of pupils do not have English as their first language.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This good school places great emphasis on pupils' personal development and they flourish in the very supportive atmosphere. They say they enjoy school and their behaviour is excellent. They contribute very well to the school, the parish and the wider community. Parents are very supportive; they recognise the good work that the school does in encouraging their children to do their best. The inspection confirms one parent's comment, 'St Joseph's Infants School is a very caring school.' Parents are encouraged to become part of school life and the school has a strong sense of community.

Pupils achieve well and standards are well above national averages. Children make a good start in school because of the excellent care and support and the good teaching in the Reception class. In 2008 most children achieved the expected learning goals for five-year-olds. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress and standards are always above the national average. The school's results in the Year 2 2008 national assessments rose and inspection evidence indicates that the improvements in standards can be maintained. These improvements occurred because of better marking of pupils' work and more targeted support for the different ability groups within each class. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Pupils learning English as an additional language make very good progress.

Pupils make excellent progress in their personal development. This is because of the very strong care and support that they receive from the staff. Pupils feel safe and secure in school because they know that the school rigorously implements good procedures for keeping them free from harassment. Because of the very effective programme for health education, pupils have a very good understanding of how to eat healthily and why it is necessary to take exercise. The school's family groups provide pupils with a role in shaping the future of the school community. Pupils' involvement in the parish and wider community helps them to understand that they are part of a much bigger 'family'. The school's emphasis on the pupils' personal development prepares them exceptionally well for the next stage of education.

Good teaching throughout the school helps pupils to achieve well. Teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils well, understand how they learn and set work that meets their needs. The excellent relationship between staff and children contributes to the pupils' excellent behaviour and motivates them to try their best. Teaching assistants provide very effective support to all pupils and this helps them to learn more productively. Occasionally, adults spend too much time talking to pupils and sometimes they give pupils answers too readily, rather than letting them solve simple problems themselves.

Curriculum provision is good and teachers are adept at adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of their pupils. For example, staff often follow lines of enquiry generated by the children themselves. The school's links with the parish and also Uganda help pupils to gain an understanding of a bigger family community. Pupils benefit from a good range of visits and visitors and the after-school provision is adequate.

The good leadership and management are having a positive impact on pupils' achievements. The collective approach that the headteacher has successfully developed meets the needs of this small school very effectively. Governance is good. The staff and governors work well together. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school's self-evaluation process however lacks rigor and governors are not involved early enough

in identifying the areas for school improvement. Progress since the last inspection has been good and the school has a good capacity to improve.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children make a good start to their school life because of the good teaching that leads to the good progress they make in the Reception class. Children join the Reception class with a very wide range of skills, however the majority have the skills expected for their age. Both the boys and girls make good progress in the Reception class and most reach standards that are above the national expectations. Children want to come to school and learn because of the excellent care and support and the wide range of appropriate activities offered to them by staff. They are encouraged to work together and this contributes effectively to their very good personal development and preparation for the next stage in their education. The Reception class is well led and managed. The teacher and teaching assistant work well together and they have made many improvements over the last three years. They are aware that the outdoor area still needs further developments to get the best possible learning experiences for the children. The staff have excellent relationships with parents.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Develop a robust school self-evaluation and target setting process that involves the governors.
- Make greater use of questions and learning tasks which require pupils to solve problems for themselves.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' standards are well above average when they leave the school and their achievement is good. In Years 1 and 2 staff build well upon the good progress the children made in the Reception class. Although girls attain higher standards than the boys, both make equally good progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the good support they receive from the teachers and teaching assistants. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language make very good progress because of the way in which they are encouraged to join in activities by the adults and other children in their class.

The school's results in the Year 2 national assessments have been consistently above average. The 2008 results show marked improvements from the slightly lower results in 2006 and 2007. This was the result of a more rigorous, consistent approach to marking pupils' work and a good range of strategies to challenge the wide range of abilities within each class.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Personal development and well-being, including pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. Pupils thrive because staff respect them and are very committed to meeting their needs. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes in lessons and around school are excellent. Pupils say that they really enjoy coming to school. They enjoy their lessons, working hard and seeing their friends and this is reflected in their good attendance. Pupils feel very safe and secure in school and say that they can talk to any member of staff if they have a problem. Pupils know that they are listened to and that they make a significant contribution

to school life. For example, they value the opportunities to share ideas and thoughts within the school's 'family groups'. Taking responsibility is relished particularly by the class leaders who enjoy the range of jobs they do. A carefully structured health education programme ensures pupils have a very good understanding of how to keep healthy. Within school, pupils acquire a range of life skills such as good manners, concentration, motivation to succeed and working alongside other people and this, allied with their good academic achievement, prepares them well for the next stage of education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Good teaching promotes good learning and achievement. In the lessons seen, consistently strong features were teachers' high expectations of pupil behaviour, the excellent relationships between adults and pupils and the effective deployment of very skilled teaching assistants and other classroom helpers. Teachers use their subject knowledge well and apply their knowledge of how pupils learn to create interesting lessons. Planning is thorough and teachers are very clear about what pupils are to learn in each lesson. Pupils are taught how to work together and the efficient teamwork seen amongst the adults provides an excellent role model. The consistently well marked pupils' work with clear comments helps pupils to celebrate their successes and improve their work. While lessons generally have a brisk pace, occasionally adults talk too much and over-elaborate instructions, reducing the time that pupils have to do their work. Pupils sometimes are not given sufficient opportunities to solve simple problems themselves because the adults are too keen to provide the answers. The high degree of professional dialogue amongst the staff is proving effective in helping new staff integrate into the school and maintaining the quality of teaching.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils receive a good curriculum. It fully meets national requirements. Sufficient emphasis is given to the development of the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). Provision for pupils' personal and social skills is very good. The very strong links with the parish help the pupils to understand their role in a wider community. A very productive link with Uganda is giving pupils a good understanding of how children in another part of the world live. The staff are adept at adapting the curriculum to the needs of the pupils in their class. For example, Reception pupils were very interested in treasure maps and these were used to engage pupils, particularly the boys, in reading and writing activities. These activities were also effectively used to promote links with parents. Pupils are not consistently given sufficient opportunities to develop their own solutions to simple problems. The range of after-school activities is adequate. Pupils benefit from the good use of visits out of school and well-informed and experienced visitors into the school.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Care and support are excellent and guidance is good. Parents are very appreciative of the excellent care and support all staff provide for the pupils. The supportive network is highly successful in ensuring the inclusion of all pupils, especially those who are most vulnerable.

Procedures and routines for pupils' health and safety are robust and risk assessments are fully in place. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet national requirements. The school's very positive relationships with outside agencies and families ensure that vulnerable pupils and others who need additional help are supported effectively and make good progress. The school has adequate checking and recording systems to measure pupils' academic progress but the information is not used enough to inform the school's self-evaluation. The marking of pupils' work is very good and, because pupils are clear about what they need to do better, standards rose in 2008.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The good leadership and management have a positive impact on the pupils' academic achievements and personal development. The headteacher has successfully developed an effective team of staff who work well together for the benefit of the pupils in the school. This collective approach helps staff to manage the many responsibilities that they each have to fulfil and is proving very successful in this small infant school. The approach has resulted in improved standards in 2008 and all staff having a clear understanding of what the school is developing next. Governance is good. Governors are well informed about what is happening in the school but they are not always sufficiently involved in the strategic development of the school. Although staff and governors have a good general understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, self-evaluation lacks rigour and collected information is not interrogated well enough. The school improvement plan highlights the correct areas for development but the targets could be more precise. Financial management is secure and the school provides good value for money. The planned high budget surplus from 2007/2008 is being appropriately used this year within the school's improvement plan. The very positive relationships that the school has fostered with the parents, the parish and the community are excellent and this contributes to the pupils' successes.

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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?	2
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 <sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	1

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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**

11 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Infant School, Gateshead, DH3 1LU

Thank you for making me so welcome when I inspected your school on 9 and 10 September. I found everyone very helpful and this helped me to understand how your school works.

I am very pleased to tell you that I agree with you that yours is a good school and that you and your parents are right to be very proud of it.

It is a very caring school and this helps you to develop excellent personal and social skills. The teachers give you lots of interesting things to do and help you learn well. You told me that you feel very safe and secure in school and if you have a problem someone will help you. Your parents told me that the adults give you a good education and encourage you to do your very best. I agree with your parents.

Your school is well led and managed. The staff and governors are working hard to make your school an even better place. I have asked them to improve the way in which they check how well things are going and decide how to improve things. I have also asked that you be given more encouragement to solve problems for yourselves.

I enjoyed talking to you, your teachers and all the other adults who work in your school. I also enjoyed watching you learn in lessons and outside in the play areas. I wish you and all of the staff and governors the very best in the future.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Hudson

Lead inspector