

Chester-Le-Street CofE (Controlled) Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114213
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	367402
Inspection dates	17–18 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Clive Petts

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	168
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Kirk
Headteacher	Mrs Joan Twomey
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 16 lessons and observed seven class teachers. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They analysed 59 questionnaire responses from parents and carers and looked at questionnaires from staff and pupils. The inspectors also looked at: pupils' progress and achievement data; intervention and support programmes; documents relating to the safeguarding of pupils; school policies; and plans for improving the quality of teaching and learning. They scrutinised pupils' current and past work and spoke to the School Improvement Partner to discuss her reports.

The inspectors reviewed many aspects of the school's work and looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The quality of learning and the progress made by all groups of pupils, particularly in writing.
- The quality of teaching and learning across the school and its effectiveness in supporting achievement and attainment.
- The leadership and management at all levels and its effectiveness in maintaining performance and bringing about and sustaining any improvement.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average sized school. Almost all of the pupils are of White British heritage, with very few who speak English as an additional language. The school is part of a national pilot scheme which enables all pupils to access a free school meal. A higher than average proportion of pupils has special educational needs and/or disabilities. An average number have a statement of special educational needs. In partnership with the on-site infant school, the school extends its services in that it provides a breakfast club and after-school club. The school has gained the Artsmark Gold, International School and UNICEF Rights Respecting awards.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school in which all pupils are exceptionally well cared for, with all given every chance to achieve success. Their good achievement and enjoyment are the result of some energetic and effective teaching. At the centre of the school's happy, family ethos is the passion and vision of the headteacher, very ably supported by a forward-thinking governing body. The school enjoys the total confidence of all parents and carers that their children will be kept safe. One parent summed up the views of many by writing, 'My child comes out of school each night with a big smile on her face and constantly talks about the school day, which speaks volumes'.

The starting points of most pupils are broadly average for their age, although with some weaknesses in communication skill. By the end of Year 6, attainment is typically above average. Although attainment has varied a little in national tests over the past two years, inspection evidence confirmed by accurate school data reveals that current Year 6 pupils are on course to reach above average attainment. This represents good progress overall, with staff working successfully to enrich writing skills. The recent implementation of the Dare to Inspire learning initiative is adding to the richness of first-hand experiences and successfully inspiring pupils to extend their analytical skills and understanding. This is helping to boost their good progress and achievement, especially in Years 5 and 6. For example, a group of pupils were observed totally engrossed testing the quality of their river water samples, with one pupil particularly concerned whether fish could survive.

Thorough and accurate assessment, particularly on entry, added to the efficient checking of development, guides lesson planning well. Yet, this information is not always relentlessly exploited, adapting activities or targeting less well-developed skills, to meet individual needs and talents and further boost achievement. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good and, in some individual cases, outstanding progress, because of the highly effective intervention and support. Those learning English make the same good progress as their peers. Pupils display a keen appetite for learning because the majority of teaching is good, although there are occasions when the expectations for the application and concentration of younger pupils could be higher. Marking is positive and helpful, but does not always present challenging enough targets and provide well-defined steps for improvement. Behaviour is good and sometimes exemplary, because pupils are taught to respect and value each other's differences. The school's promotion of community cohesion is outstanding. Pupils greatly appreciate the benefits of keeping healthy and fit. They make a strong contribution to school decision making and play an active part in community activities.

Senior leaders have an accurate grasp of school strengths and areas for improvement, because their approach is reflective and self-critical. The developing richness of learning

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opportunities reveals the widening experience and continuously developing skills of subject leaders. As a result, the school has a good and rising capacity to add to its successes.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further enhance the quality and depth of learning, building upon the existing good practice by:
 - raising even further the expectations of what younger pupils can achieve
 - consistently using assessment information to shape activities to cater for individual abilities and talents, and pinpoint exactly what skills need to be strengthened
 - ensuring that challenging targets and well-defined steps for improvement constantly drive the achievement for all pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils are motivated and apply themselves in lessons well, because good teaching and effective support is focused on making certain all achieve equally well. Consequently, attainment is above average at the end of Year 6, with an increasing proportion of pupils reaching higher levels. In the best practice, active learning constantly challenges thinking, pupils are very rarely off-task and teacher's questions probe understanding. Work seen in pupils' books and teachers' assessments confirm the good progress and achievement that all groups are making. Often inspiring opportunities are presented to allow pupils to practise their skills. However, expectations of what pupils can achieve are not consistently high enough. As a result, learning opportunities are not exploited sufficiently, concentration slips and progress becomes a little more variable.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those from potentially challenging or vulnerable circumstances, make at least good progress. That is because their needs are quickly and accurately identified and their support thoughtfully planned and delivered. Pupils display confidence answering questions and justifying their ideas, although they do not always present their work with sufficient skill and refinement.

The warm and happy school atmosphere ensures that pupils feel safe. Their outstanding spiritual and cultural development, combined with their good moral and social awareness, has a firm focus on pupils' consideration of the needs of others. Pupils mix well, thrive on responsibility, display independence and respond positively to the advice they are given. Attendance is steadily improving and is typically above average. Pupils are rightly proud of their role in school improvement, such as contributing the school's sustainable development initiatives. They enthusiastically celebrate the diversity of the wider community, for example participating in celebrations in a mosque or visiting Chinatown to have a meal, both in nearby Newcastle. They have an excellent grasp of what is required to stay healthy and fit. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in the diverse world in which they live.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The school's positive ethos, reflecting its Christian values, underpins its outstanding commitment to high quality care, ensuring all pupils are able to achieve their potential. Increasingly, more inventive approaches to learning are providing memorable first-hand experiences which promote and challenge thinking. In the best examples, learning opportunities are varied, inspiring pupils to think for themselves and manage their own learning, building on their developing understanding. For example, pupils presented persuasive arguments to defend Tim after watching the animation of The Highwayman.

Positive relationships add to the harmonious climate for learning. Learning activities are normally demanding and well-coordinated, but there remains scope to increase the level of challenge and to expect more, for example adding to the sophistication of work presentation and level of application. Marking is helpful and constructive but not all opportunities are taken to involve pupils in judging the quality of their own work and how it can be improved.

Progressively, the good curriculum uses themes in creative ways to enhance the level of pupils' motivation to practise skills. Pupils enjoy an extremely varied programme of visits and visitors to enrich their learning. For example, pupils were seen listening attentively and watching the site manager closely to ensure that vegetable seedlings for their allotment were properly looked-after. They spoke enthusiastically about participation in their sporting, musical and drama events, their fund-raising for a pupil in the Dominican

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Republic and their residential visits to Marrick Priory in Swaledale. Together, this adds to the breadth of experiences, confidence and independence.

The outstanding care, guidance and support which pupils receive are a clear strength of the school. Staff can point to real successes in helping pupils to overcome difficulties and testing events in their lives, to recapture their enjoyment of learning and achieve success. Parents and carers appreciate the time that staff spend discussing any issue of concern. The very good links with specialist support agencies make a valuable contribution to involving families in their children's development. This is helping them appreciate the value and benefits of regular attendance, positive attitudes in the classroom and the good achievement that follows.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The enthusiasm and vision of the headteacher in providing enjoyable, effective learning spreads through the whole school. The governing body and staff share a determination to provide high quality care and to maintain and promote at least good achievement. Consequently, staff collaborative working is a strength and is evident in all practice. Senior leaders provide a firm focus on robust checking and accurate assessment of development. This informs planning effectively. Concerted action is successfully eliminating weaknesses in the quality of pupils' writing. The quality of learning experiences is continuously improving, for example, through the recent successful implementation of the Dare to Inspire approaches incorporating fieldwork.

The governing body plays an active part in shaping the direction of the school, constantly reflecting on how to improve effectiveness. The positive engagement of parents and carers can be seen in the confidence and trust that their children will be kept safe. The increasing expertise of subject leadership is adding to the rigour of monitoring and evaluation. The very productive links with the local community, including both the Anglican and Methodist churches, adds to the strong sense of family. Community cohesion is promoted highly effectively to provide pupils with direct experiences of the diverse world around them. This encourages appreciation of the value of differences and different ways of life.

The school adopts good procedures and practices for safeguarding and risk assessment. All requirements are met and practice is especially robust in relation to child protection and ensuring pupils are taught to be safety conscious. The considerable sensitivity demonstrated by senior leaders to equality of opportunities is reflected in the fact that

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pupils of all abilities and backgrounds perform equally well and share the same happy, friendly experiences.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

About one third of all parents and carers returned the questionnaire with their views of the school. This is in line with the national average level of returns. These views were overwhelmingly positive about the quality of experiences that the school provides. All parents and carers appreciate that their children are kept safe. The inspectors' findings support these views. A few parents and carers expressed concerns about how the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors judged behaviour to be good and saw some exemplary behaviour, especially of older pupils in lessons and in assemblies. They observed teachers dealing with minor incidents of immature behaviour effectively.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Chester-Le-Street CoFE (Controlled) Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 59 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 168 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	51	26	44	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	36	61	22	37	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	32	54	23	39	1	2	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	51	20	34	5	8	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	34	58	23	39	1	2	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	47	26	44	4	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	47	31	53	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	29	49	26	44	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	47	22	37	2	3	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	26	44	19	32	8	14	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	37	26	44	4	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	33	56	21	36	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	49	24	41	2	3	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



19 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Chester-Le-Street CofE (Controlled) Junior School, Chester le Street, DH2 2JT

I want to thank you for the very polite and friendly welcome that you gave the inspectors when we visited your school. We really enjoyed our time talking to you.

Yours is a good school. We were impressed by your good and sometimes exemplary behaviour. The staff take exceptional care of you and make certain all of you can achieve well. You clearly feel confident and safe, because of the very effective way staff protect you from any risk. You have an outstanding grasp of the benefits of eating healthily and keeping fit. The excellent links you enjoy with the local community, and your successful contribution to making the school better, adds to the quality of your development. Some of you told us that your teachers and the visitors you meet make your learning lively and fun. As a result, your skills are improving well as you get older. Your staff are taking positive action to make your learning more fun and challenging, to add to your skills. This can be seen in your improving analytical skills and your writing.

We have asked your headteacher, staff and the governing body to look at further ways of improving teaching to help you to achieve even more. We would like staff to use the information they have on how well you are doing to plan activities which excite and interest you more. We would like them to expect more of you, especially younger pupils. We have also asked senior leaders to make certain that you are set challenging targets and given clear and regular advice as to how you can improve your work.

You can all play your part by continuing to work as hard as you can and attending school regularly. Thank you for helping with this inspection.

Best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Clive Petts

Lead inspector

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