

The Ofsted logo, featuring the word "Ofsted" in a stylized, handwritten font.

Cotsford Infant School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number	114151
LEA	Durham
Inspection number	279323
Inspection dates	14 March 2006 to 15 March 2006
Reporting inspector	Mrs Kathleen McArthur

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Cotsford Park
School category	Community		Horden
Age range of pupils	4 to 7		Peterlee, County Durham
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 5865372
Number on roll	110	Fax number	0191 5865372
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Alan Reardon
Date of previous inspection	1 March 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Hazel McGregor

Age group 4 to 7	Inspection dates 14 March 2006 - 15 March 2006	Inspection number 279323
----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

This small infant school is situated in an area of considerable social and economic deprivation and the number of children who receive free school meals is more than twice the national average. When children start school, their attainment is below that expected for children of this age. A high proportion of children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. None has English as an additional language.

The school has been awarded the Activemark Gold, the Healthy Schools Standard, Basic Skills, and local authority awards for family learning work.

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 that gives good value for money. The inspection confirms the school's accurate evaluation of its effectiveness.

Leadership and management are good overall. Good teaching, including very effective assessment systems, ensures that children achieve well to reach broadly average standards by the time they leave the school. Standards in writing are lower than those in other subjects because children have limited vocabulary and means of expressing themselves and, in some lessons, have too little time to write. Good provision in the Foundation Stage ensures that children progress well but few reach the standards expected at the end of reception. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive high quality support and achieve well in relation to their capabilities.

Parents are very positive about everything the school provides and appreciate the 'open door' approach. Good personal development ensures that behaviour is good. Children are happy, feel safe, care about each other and know a lot about keeping healthy. However, attendance is below average and not all children arrive punctually; and so children's progress is adversely affected. The good curriculum offers varied learning experiences and is enriched very well by extra activities, popular clubs and visits. This means that children enjoy their lessons. The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for all pupils.

Overall, standards have risen since the previous inspection, indicating good improvement. The school has good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in writing by increasing children's vocabulary, language skills and by providing more time for them to write.
- Extend the existing systems to improve attendance and punctuality.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and, by the end of Year 2, children attain standards that are average for their age. When children start school, their attainment is below that normally seen, and well below in the important areas of language and personal development. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage in relation to their starting points, but few reach the expected goals at the end of reception.

Achievement is good through Key Stage 1. Children respond well to challenging targets and most reach broadly average standards at the end of Year 2. Standards vary slightly from year to year, but have improved overall since the previous inspection. Results dipped in 2005, particularly in writing, owing to the high number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and some poor attendance. Standards in mathematics are higher than those in reading and writing, reflecting the children's very limited language skills when they start school. Girls achieve better than boys,

particularly in writing. Actions to improve progress in writing by extending vocabulary and language skills are well chosen. They include support programmes, visits, speaking and listening opportunities and drama, all of which have a good impact on children's progress. Nevertheless, in some lessons, children do not have enough time for writing. Individual progress is closely monitored to set targets for learning and direct extra help. This is particularly valuable for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are supported well and make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development is good, and helps children achieve well. Children say they like the work, their teachers, friends and the wide range of opportunities, particularly visits and the 'Place2Be' provision. They are well prepared for their next stage of education.

Children feel welcome and secure in the Foundation Stage and this helps them to make good progress in their personal development. Despite the school's efforts, including rewards and phone calls home, attendance has declined slightly from previous years and is below average.

Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 follow effective programmes of personal and social education. As a result, relationships are very good. Parents and carers appreciate the open door approach, and feel 'welcome any time'. Children respect staff and each other. A well managed system of rewards and sanctions results in good behaviour overall. The Place2Be provides a secure setting for children and parents to consider emotional issues. Children feel safe in school, their views are listened to and problems dealt with fairly.

Children learn a lot about staying healthy through 'Early Bird' morning exercises, eating fruit and drinking water, health weeks, and playground activity clubs. Children enjoy responsibilities and some are 'mini buds' and befriend others in the playground. Several play in the Community Band. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their spirituality is enhanced in lessons. For example, children were filled with awe by their discoveries in science. Children's knowledge and understanding of other cultures and local traditions is extended through visits out of school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall. Children like 'all the colours' and the stimulating environment around them. The best lessons feature careful planning, high expectations, different teaching styles, practical investigations and challenging targets. Pupils know what they will learn and strive to reach their individual targets. Speaking and listening activities, such as 'talking partners' and drama are included to improve language skills. Some lessons are not as well organised as most because children spend too long listening to the teacher. In these lessons, children's attention wanders, and they do

not have enough time to do their own writing. This hinders the development of their independent writing skills.

Rigorous tracking and effective assessment systems provide a clear picture of where support is needed and give valuable information for planning future work and setting targets. Teachers' marking helps children improve their work. Children are becoming more involved in their own learning, reporting 'we have to pass our targets'.

Well-informed teaching assistants provide good support, particularly for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and meets all statutory requirements. It is enriched very effectively by visits, visitors and popular extra-curricular activities that extend children's experiences. Pupils' use of basic skills in literacy and numeracy is planned well in other subjects, for example, writing about health, and measuring the distance toy cars covered in science investigations. Teaching and support programmes are used effectively to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy, although writing remains an area for continuing development. Staff ensure that children use information and communication technology (ICT) to help them learn. The interactive whiteboards are an effective learning tool for children and staff.

Gifted and talented children are provided with additional activities, for example, the Community Band. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are included fully in all activities and their needs are met well. Children contribute to their school and the wider community by training as 'mini buds', looking after the garden and singing in the choir.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support. Good child protection procedures, risk assessments and health and safety procedures are fully in place. Excellent links with all health, education and welfare agencies, and the Place2Talk and Place2Be initiatives offer valuable support to children and families with particular needs. The programmes of personal development contribute well to children's progress. Relationships are a strength of the school and ensure that children feel valued, safe and secure. Staff know the children and their families very well and the school successfully meets the aim of forming constructive partnerships with parents to help children achieve well. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully involved in all the school offers. Rigorous academic tracking systems ensure that children are very well supported with very clear guidance and challenging targets. Parents rightly feel their children are very well cared for.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Strong, committed leadership by the headteacher has established a clear, realistic vision for school improvement and raising standards in partnership with staff, governors and parents. The deputy headteacher provides good support, and has developed effective assessment systems. Curriculum leaders manage their subjects well. The drive to raise standards has led to good overall improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in the Foundation Stage. The quality of teaching is monitored rigorously and areas for development accurately identified. The school correctly recognises writing as an on-going area for improvement.

Equality of opportunity is promoted excellently. Skilled teaching assistants, support programmes, varied teaching styles and strong links with external agencies ensure that the learning needs of all children are fully met.

The school's self-assessment is honest and searching, and gives a clear picture of strengths and need for a constant focus on raising standards. Finance and resources are managed carefully to support areas for improvement in the well focused annual development plan. Professional development and performance management targets are matched to priorities for improvement. Governance is satisfactory. Governors know the school well and are involved through subject links, but do not always question or challenge the information provided to them. Good links with the local nursery and other schools ensure a smooth transition between schools. The school is well placed for further improvement.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

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?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	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	3	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?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	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	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	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	3	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

Ofsted helpline

08456 404045

To the children of:

Cotsford Infant School

Cotsford Park

Horden

Peterlee

County Durham

SR8 4TB

15 March 2006

Dear Children

Thank you very much for making my visit so enjoyable. You made me very welcome, were polite, helpful and friendly and told me lots of things you like about your school. Here are some of the good things I found:

your headteacher has worked hard with the staff, the governors and your parents to create a good school that cares for you all very well

you work hard to 'pass your targets' and enjoy your lessons and all the visits and visitors

you behave well, help each other and carry out your responsibilities sensibly.

I have asked the teachers:

to help you improve the standard of your writing.

You can help by:

attending school every day and making sure you arrive on time.

Once again, thank you for all your help. I hope you will all carry on working hard and helping to make your school a happy place for everyone.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Kathleen McArthur

Lead inspector