

St John's Catholic Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105082
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	308760
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Maureen Coleman

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	5–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	176
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs M Ross
Headteacher	Mrs M Bulmer
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2005
School address	Old Chester Road Bebington Wirral Merseyside CH63 7LH
Telephone number	0151 6455291
Fax number	0151 6456803

Age group	5–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St John's Infant School is a larger than average school situated in the urban residential area of Bebington. In the last two years, applications for places at the school have been greater than the number of places available. The vast majority of the pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average. On entry to school most children have skills that are well below those expected for their age. The school has gained awards for Healthy Schools, School Travel Plan, Activemark and the Financial Management Standard.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St John's Catholic Infant School provides an outstanding quality of care and education for its pupils. Inspired by the headteacher, the leadership team have successfully developed the curriculum and quality of teaching and learning to outstanding levels. Consequently, pupils achieve outstandingly well in their academic and personal development. The school has made very good progress since its last inspection.

This is a happy school where pupils are keen to learn, feel safe, enjoy lessons and attend regularly. Consequently, their attitudes and responses to learning are first class and this aids their rapid progress. Teachers plan excellent lessons and pupils say that they are interesting and exciting. Effective use is made of the school's assessment data to ensure that work is well matched to the needs of every child. Very effective use is made of the school's information technology resources to engage pupils in learning and to enrich their experiences across the curriculum. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive high quality support from a dedicated and committed team of teaching assistants. Relationships between staff and pupils are very strong and behaviour is outstanding in lessons and around the school. As a result pupils feel confident to turn to members of staff for help. High expectations are placed on pupils and they respond enthusiastically and with increasing maturity. They are encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles because the school provides regular physical exercise and helps them make sensible choices such as taking frequent opportunities to drink water.

The school's leadership has successfully developed a team that holds no complacency in its drive to raise standards. Staff are totally committed to providing the very best for all pupils and their great strength is the way they consistently expect the highest achievement from everyone in the school. Senior leaders are well informed about the school's performance due to the rigour of systems for monitoring and evaluation. Weaknesses are quickly improved through effective planning and targeted resources together with staff development and training where appropriate. Governors work closely with the senior leadership to analyse outcomes for pupils and they are knowledgeable about many matters of education and care. Consequently, the standards which pupils attain have remained above average for several years. Pupils' achievement is outstanding. The school's capacity for further improvement is outstanding. Parents hold the school in high regard and the words of one parent expressed the feelings of many who returned inspection questionnaires: 'Our child loves school. It provides a lovely, warm and caring environment where the needs of the children are clearly the top priority for all the staff.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children, from a low starting point on entry to the Reception class, make outstanding progress so that by the end of the Foundation Stage their skills are above the expected levels for their age. Both leadership and teaching are outstanding. Classrooms are organised very well into areas of learning and make good provision for children to use all their senses to learn through discovery. Strong focus on developing children's communication skills underpins many activities and role-play is used imaginatively to support children's development in this area. Personal and social skills develop well through the good opportunities children have to extend independence by making choices about what they will do and tidying away resources. They learn to share and play happily with each other. Teachers and support staff interact very well

with the children, playing alongside them, modelling and promoting language, encouraging them to talk and describe their activities. There is a good focus on developing basic skills, for example, by providing opportunities for children to write in role-play areas. Very effective and detailed ongoing assessments based on first-hand observations chart children's achievements and progress and inform future planning for groups and individuals. Parents feel welcome and trusting relationships with the staff encourage parents to be fully involved in their child's learning. Where appropriate, agencies are engaged effectively to support children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

This is an outstanding school that knows itself very well and is already taking the steps it has identified to make it even better. As a result there is no significant area for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement and standards are outstanding. Standards in Key Stage 1, as shown by teacher's assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2007, demonstrate that reading is well above the national average, writing is above average and mathematics is broadly average. Standards over time in national assessments taken in Year 2 are consistently above average and work seen during the inspection confirms this. Any variations in standards attained in national assessments are directly proportionate to variations in the attainment on entry of different year groups. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress due to the high level of well-targeted support and early intervention strategies. Pupils' positive attitudes towards their learning, their willingness to engage and their enthusiastic responses, aid the pace of their progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The high level of attendance reflects their happiness in school and enjoyment in learning. They enjoy excellent relationships with their teachers and respond by behaving in an exemplary manner. The Christian faith is at the heart of the school's work, but pupils also learn about other religions and cultures to ensure that they are well prepared for life in a multicultural society. Pupils say they feel very safe in school and would confidently go to a teacher if they felt concerned. They are pleased that their views are taken into account through the work of the school council. Their excellent understanding of the importance of a healthy diet and physical exercise is reflected by the school's successful achievement of the Healthy School award and the Activemark. Pupils have very good literacy and numeracy skills and excellent attitudes to learning, which prepare them very well for the next stage of their learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers use assessment very well to carefully monitor progress and, consequently, know the pupils extremely well. This enables them to plan lessons so that activities accurately meet their different learning needs. Lessons move at a fast pace and are enlivened by the effective use of interactive whiteboards. The teachers' caring and consistent approach, clear explanations

and effective and skilful use of questions, ensure pupils clearly understand what they have to do. Classrooms are happy, busy places with pupils moving to activities enthusiastically, concentrating hard and working very well. These features, combined with the teachers' very effective use of the high number of skilled support staff, ensure that pupils of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make excellent progress and achieve outstandingly.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is broad and balanced and carefully planned to ensure it meets the needs of all. Effective links between subjects add to the enjoyment of learning and make it more meaningful. Linked to this, and promoting pupils' personal as well as academic development, is the extensive range of visits and visitors to school and extra-curricular activities. Specialist teaching enhances good opportunities for pupils to develop creativity through art and music. Curriculum provision to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and vulnerable pupils is very good as a result of well-targeted intervention programmes and appropriate individual education programmes. The standard of information technology and quality of provision are outstanding.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Parents are very appreciative of the outstanding care, guidance and support given to their children. Child protection, health and safety and risk assessment procedures are in place and are reviewed regularly. Effective systems are in place to identify and support any vulnerable pupils and those with additional learning needs so that they make progress in line with their peers. The academic guidance given to pupils is excellent. Target setting procedures, and the school's systems for assessing and tracking the progress of pupils, are very well organised. Pupils appreciate the guidance they are given through the teachers' helpful comments in lessons and excellent marking of their work, which gives them a clear understanding of how they can improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher and senior leaders provide strong, clear direction to move the school forward. An outstanding feature of the leadership team is the quality and care it gives to its pupils. Due to the outstanding and very effective procedures the school has in place for monitoring the school's work, the leadership team has a very accurate view of its strengths and areas for development. Leadership at all levels contribute to the school's self-evaluation. The governors have a very clear and accurate understanding of performance in all areas of school life and are committed to seeking first-hand information by informal visits to the school. Very good financial management combined with pupils' very good levels of achievement means that the school provides excellent value for money. The school receives overwhelming support from parents. The outstanding relationship the school has with the parents, parish and the local area reflects the school's commitment to nurturing children as future members of their community.

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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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of St John's Catholic Infant School, Wirral, CH63 7LH

Following our inspection, we would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome and for talking to us about your experiences. We would like to tell you what we found out about your school.

- St John's is an excellent school.
- You enjoy coming to school, you behave very well and work very hard.
- Your teachers work very hard and make learning fun and interesting.
- Your headteacher and teachers know you very well and take good care of you.
- You are well prepared for your next school.
- Your headteacher and governors are very good at improving your school.
- You reach high standards in your work.
- You feel safe and know how to keep healthy.

Thank you for helping us so much with the inspection of your school. We hope that you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers to keep St John's such an outstanding school.