

John of Gaunt Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120988
Local Authority	NORFOLK LA
Inspection number	313821
Inspection date	6 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Roger Brown

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Brian Copelin
Headteacher	Mrs Fiona Chant
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2004
School address	Hungate Street Aylsham Norwich Norfolk NR11 6JZ
Telephone number	01263 732844
Fax number	

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' personal development and well-being, the quality of the curriculum, and the care, guidance and support pupils receive, the impact of leadership and management at all levels and pupils' progress, including the progress of different groups of pupils. Evidence was gathered from discussions with staff, governors and children, brief lesson observations, a scrutiny of documentation and samples of children's work. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in as much detail, but the inspection found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

John of Gaunt Infant and Nursery School is a below average sized school serving the town of Aylsham and the surrounding area. Almost all of the children are of White British heritage with a very small number from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of children entitled to free school meals is below average as is the proportion of children who need additional support. A small number of these have a statement of special educational needs. The average level of development for children starting at the school is broadly in line with national expectations. The school has an ECO Schools Bronze Award.

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. Aspects of its performance are outstanding. In its work with parents and its partnerships with other local schools and agencies, it is developing an exciting and far-reaching set of practices. These are successfully engaging children and their families in a set of initiatives that are truly about education for life. Aspects of the school's work are seen nationally as examples of best practice. These include in particular, its contribution to the local school cluster partnership and the work staff are leading in terms of family learning.

The standards the children attain are consistently above national averages. After an excellent start in the Foundation Stage, the children make good progress in all areas, and their achievements are good. They make even better progress in their writing; they write with enthusiasm and are willing to have a go. Children readily experiment with ideas and styles, confidently applying their phonic knowledge to write new words. Higher attaining children and those who need extra support with their learning make progress that is at least good and at times, outstanding. The middle group of learners, those whose reading and mathematics skills are already good, do not make accelerated progress. They are less confident in applying their knowledge and understanding in these two areas to new tasks and activities.

Teaching and learning are characterised by high quality relationships at all levels, adult to child, and adult-to-adult. Children are always encouraged to explain their ideas and thinking, sometimes in oral responses to questions, and at other times in writing. Thoughtful planning, that embraces new ideas and strategies, ensures that the school's curriculum is excellent. The staff carefully combine all elements of the national and local agendas, and the school's own, into their work. Information and communication technology is thoughtfully integrated across all subjects. As a result of the exciting curriculum, children are engaged in their learning. They understand the connections between the different subjects and topics. This is because these are made relevant and meaningful to them by carefully chosen examples and ideas. There is an excitement and a buzz in the classrooms as the children make discoveries and complete tasks successfully.

The school's partnership with the local cluster of schools forms the key to much of its work. From the point children start at the school in Foundation Stage, excellent opportunities are provided for families to become engaged with their children's learning. All new starters to the Foundation Stage are offered a home visit. The cluster's family learning coordinator, the parent support advisers and the cross phase mathematics teacher all give an input to the activities that are available for families. This has included courses on 'How our children learn', and 'Supporting learning in the classroom'. It is extended to include events such as family learning days. As a result, the children's personal development and well-being are outstanding. They expect to see parents and other adult visitors in and around the school all the time; in assemblies; in lunch; in classrooms and at events throughout the school year. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They are involved in many decisions about the school, ranging from which charity the school should support each term to the rules and procedures about how they should behave.

Their behaviour is outstanding; even though it is not always perfect, they know and understand what to do when things go wrong. Incidents and fall-outs do not escalate because the children are able to negotiate with each other. They understand that when somebody says 'no', they

must respect this. They understand that the safety of themselves and other children is of paramount importance.

It is little wonder that the parental responses to the inspection questionnaire were so positive. 'A fantastic school,' ... 'a wonderful caring and supportive environment which allows our children to thrive.' were typical of the views expressed. The children really enjoy their education, their attendance is good and rigorously monitored. They are very well prepared for the next stage of their education and the care, guidance and support the children receive is excellent. All statutory procedures are in place. The children get great support in their academic development from the procedures and processes that staff use to guide each step in their learning.

Since the last inspection the school has continued to develop and improve. This is the result of the excellent leadership and management. The leadership of the headteacher is vital but is not the only strength. Staff at all levels and the governors provide leadership, initiate ideas and work very hard to ensure the school's success. The staff and governors monitor the work of the school very effectively. They understand its strengths and weaknesses well. Occasionally, they overestimate the impact of their work, but equally, at times they are too harsh on themselves, not realising just how successful they are. Considering this, alongside the good and rising levels of children's achievements, the school's capacity to improve is outstanding.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children start school with levels of ability that are typical for their age. However, their mathematical development tends to be below that expected. Excellent induction arrangements swiftly help the children settle into the warm, caring and stimulating atmosphere. Very good use is made of the indoor and outdoor areas. The children work and play happily together in an attractive and extremely well resourced environment. Routines are clear and well established so that children behave excellently and really enjoy their learning. Teaching and learning are outstanding, which, taken together with the great support from parents, ensures that all children make very good progress. By the time they move into Year 1, most children exceed the levels typical for their age in all areas of learning. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are excellent. Simple, but highly effective assessment procedures enable staff to monitor the children's progress, and help to guide them in planning the activities for the next steps in their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop and extend children's reading skills to raise standards to even higher levels.
- Raise standards in mathematics by boosting children's confidence to solve problems and help them apply their knowledge to new situations.

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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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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 disabilities make progress	2

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	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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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

7 March 2008

Dear Children,

Inspection of John of Gaunt Infant and Nursery School, Aylsham, Norfolk NR11 6JZ

Thank you for being so friendly when I visited your school. I would like to share with you what I found when I spent time in your lessons and talked with you and your teachers.

I think you go to a good school. Many of your parents wrote to me saying that they think so too. Like them, I could tell that your school is improving and that some aspects of the work you do are outstanding. For instance, what great writers you are.

I could tell from my talks with Year 2, and your teachers, that John of Gaunt is a very happy school. I was impressed by the way your teachers and your teaching assistants work together so well. It was clear to me that they enjoy being at school too. I think that is why they enjoy inviting your parents in to school. What a great idea the family learning days are. I really hope that your teachers continue to work on their ideas about family learning.

When I was discussing the progress you make with Mrs Chant and your teachers, I asked them to try to find ways to help you improve your reading and mathematics. I know that the standard of your work in these two areas is already good, but I think that they could be outstanding.

Finally, I must mention the super start everyone gets in the Foundation Stage. What an excellent beginning to school.

Thank you once again for your warm welcome.

All the best for the future.

Roger Brown

Lead Inspector