

St Patrick's Catholic College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111759
Local Authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	362740
Inspection dates	8–9 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Joan McKenna

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	560
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr Pat Hartnett
Headteacher	Mrs Melinda McAuley
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 20 lessons taught by 20 teachers. Meetings were held with the headteacher, executive headteacher, other leaders, students and representatives of the local authority and Diocese, who are also advisers to the governing body. Discussions were held with some parents and carers who were attending a meeting at the school. Inspectors observed the school's work, and scrutinised documents including policies, information about students' progress, attendance data, records of monitoring and information gathered by the school about students', parents' and carers' views.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether teaching and the use of assessment information is effective enough to ensure that all students make at least satisfactory progress.
- Whether students are provided with at least satisfactory opportunities to develop their literacy and information and communication technology skills.
- Whether students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are thriving in their learning and are making satisfactory progress.
- Whether leaders and the governing body have improved the school to the point that it is now effective in all areas and are demonstrating the capacity to improve it further.

Information about the school

This is a much smaller than average sized secondary school. The very large majority of students are of White British heritage. An above average proportion of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. St Patrick's is a specialist mathematics and computing college. It has Healthy School status and has Investors in People accreditation.

At its previous inspection in January 2010, St Patrick's was judged to require special measures because it did not provide an adequate education for its students. There have been considerable changes to leadership, governance and staffing since then. The previous headteacher left the school shortly after the inspection, at which point the local authority commissioned a National Leader in Education (NLE) to run the school until August 2011. The NLE team has provided a full-time acting headteacher, a part-time executive headteacher and support from other personnel. A new, substantive headteacher has been appointed to take up post in September 2011. The governing body has been re-established recently after a period when governance was provided by a Special School Improvement Committee. There have been some changes of staff at other levels.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

The areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been very effectively tackled. As a result, all aspects of the school's work are now at least satisfactory. Rigorous systems to regularly check students' progress have been established, and well-targeted action is taken to keep them on track. All groups of students are now making satisfactory progress in their learning. This includes those with special educational needs and/or disabilities because of much improved provision for them. Examination results rose significantly in 2010 and were above the national average. Standards are rising across the school and more students than previously are on track to meet their challenging targets. Teaching is monitored very thoroughly by senior leaders and its quality has improved to satisfactory. Some is good, but work is not always at the right level of challenge for all students and students are not encouraged to be active enough in their learning. Improved provision for information and communication technology (ICT) enables all students to develop their skills to a satisfactory level and to gain accreditation in the subject. Students' literacy skills are explicitly promoted in subjects across the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. They are strongest in areas that have been prioritised for development, particularly provision for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, the rigorous attention given to improving academic aspects of the school has not been applied to pastoral aspects to the same extent. Nevertheless, students' personal outcomes are satisfactory. They try hard to do as they are asked and are responsible members of the school community. Attendance is above average. However, their personal development is not systematically promoted through the curriculum and there are too few specifically planned opportunities to promote qualities, such as independence and initiative.

Senior leaders and managers have become increasingly effective, and the influence of the headteacher and NLE team is particularly strong in bringing about improvement. The impact of leaders at other levels is at an earlier stage of development, although high quality professional development has increased the knowledge and enthusiasm of middle leaders. Governance is good and the college is held closely to account for its effectiveness and improvement. Self-evaluation is accurate, and overall, the college is demonstrating satisfactory capacity to improve further. Its relationships with parents, carers and the wider community are satisfactory, and it is now in position to place greater priority on strengthening these links.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that that students make at least good progress by:
 - ensuring that teaching is of consistently good quality and that students learn equally effectively in all lessons
 - ensuring that work given to students in lessons is at the right level of challenge for all
 - providing more opportunities for students to be actively involved and engaged in their learning.
- Improve students' personal development by:
 - ensuring that there is a comprehensive and structured approach through the curriculum and other activities to developing all aspects of students' personal knowledge and skills, including their independence, initiative, leadership, confidence and enjoyment
 - ensuring that evidence about students' personal outcomes is rigorously monitored in order to ensure that well-targeted action is taken to promote improvement for all.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by:
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels have the knowledge, skills and understanding to accurately and rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of their areas of responsibility
 - ensuring that all leaders use the information gained to promote improvement in outcomes for students and that they check the impact of these actions
 - taking steps to increase partnership with, and the engagement of, parents and carers and the wider community.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students are conscientious and keen to do well. They follow instructions and apply themselves well to their work. They feel that more is being expected of them than previously and they are responding well to these higher expectations. They value the feedback they get through the 'Praising Stars' system used to track their progress and this helps them to focus their efforts and improve their work. However, students' learning tends to be passive because they are not given frequent enough opportunities to be actively involved through discussion, group work or investigative tasks. Even when such opportunities are provided, their lack of previous experience in these aspects means that they have not developed the skills to take full advantage of them.

Students enter the college with above average attainment. Following a period when examination results have been lower than they should have been given students' starting points, the significant increase in examination results in 2010 reversed this position. Students' achievement was satisfactory overall, albeit still not good enough in English and mathematics, despite the higher results in both subjects. However the continued trend of improvement means that the achievement of all groups of students across the school is

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now satisfactory, including in English and mathematics. It is also satisfactory in their ICT skills, and hence in both specialist subjects.

There are respectful relationships between students and staff and students feel safe and secure in school. They understand the need for a healthy lifestyle. Most eat sensibly and a good proportion take part in after-school clubs which focus on sport and physical activity. Students get on well with each other and their calm behaviour contributes to the orderly atmosphere. Some students make a contribution to the school community by acting as peer mentors and presenting the views of others through the 'Student Voice'. There is some involvement in the local community, such as through fundraising for charities and visiting the sick. However, opportunities for them to take on responsibility or to show leadership are limited. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is sound. There are strengths in spiritual development, but opportunities for them to develop cultural awareness are narrow. Most students have good basic skills. However, the development of wider skills which contribute to their future economic well-being, such as enterprise and initiative, are less well developed.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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?

Although teaching is satisfactory overall, the proportion that is good is increasing. Lesson plans, which are often very detailed, indicate that teachers know their students and their particular needs very well, particularly those with special educational needs and/or

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disabilities. In the best lessons, this information is used to modify tasks to meet the different needs of students and provide activities that engage and actively involve them. However, assessment information it is not always used to meet individual needs. The respectful relationships between teachers and students and students' willingness to do as they are asked mean that lessons usually proceed in a calm and orderly manner. While some teaching is lively, with tasks that promote critical thinking and enthusiasm for the subject, teachers do not always capitalise on students' diligence to promote active and involved learning. The feedback given to students on how well they are doing and how to do better has improved, although it is still variable.

The curriculum at Key Stage 4 has been successfully revised to allow for greater flexibility and personalisation, with students from Year 9 upwards able to make more choices from a wider range of courses, including some vocational options. Opportunities to promote skills that support students' learning, such as the ability to work in teams or to think creatively, in the Key Stage 3 curriculum have not been taken. The range of extra-curricular activities has increased, including for sport. Many of the subject-based activities are aimed at giving extra help for students to secure their target grades, which students appreciate. Literacy is promoted in a variety of ways as well as in lessons, such as through the recently developed St Patrick's Additional Resource Centre (SPARC), where a range of engaging reading materials and related activities are open to the whole student body. The lack of a coherent and comprehensive programme for promoting students' personal development is a weakness in the curriculum. Provision for the specialist subjects has improved and is satisfactory.

The care, guidance and support provided for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities or those who may be vulnerable in any way, is improving rapidly with good practice developing. Links with external agencies are ensuring students' needs are diagnosed accurately and that expert advice and support are provided. SPARC provides a particularly welcoming and popular haven for these students, as well as offering a pleasant environment for all students during and beyond the school day. There have been some improvements to systems for identifying all students' needs, and to the range and quality of support provided for those identified as at risk of falling behind. However a sharp analysis of evidence about students' personal outcomes in order to inform practice is not well developed. For example, although the newly introduced 'Consequences' system is having a positive impact on behaviour, the data resulting from it is not analysed fully to identify patterns and trends.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

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How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteacher and other members of the NLE team have a very clear vision for the school and a well-informed and perceptive understanding of what has needed to be done to improve it. Through the introduction of rigorous systems for monitoring the effectiveness of most areas the school, well-designed action to tackle issues identified and the use of a range of strategies to develop the leadership skills of other staff, satisfactory capacity for sustaining improvements into the future has been established. Middle leaders are committed and increasingly involved, although they have yet to take a full lead in monitoring their areas of responsibility and in using this information to promote further improvement, particularly in pastoral areas. Continuity of personnel from the Special School Improvement Committee to the re-formed governing body has ensured that governance remains of good quality. The governing body has paid particular attention to ensuring continued vigilance and promotion of further improvement through the forthcoming period of transition at headteacher level. Students' outcomes being satisfactory means that value for money is satisfactory, but financial management is prudent. Arrangements to safeguard students meet requirements. Equal opportunities are promoted through the attention to reducing any gaps in achievement between groups of students. While discrimination is not tolerated and respect for others is promoted, not enough is done to promote awareness of difference cultures. Similarly, while cohesion within the school and local community is promoted, there is less attention to doing so on a wider front. Steps have been taken to improve the engagement of parents and carers with some success, although not all are positive about the school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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Views of parents and carers

Questionnaires for parents and carers are not distributed for monitoring inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so. However, the results of some school based questionnaires completed by parents and carers were looked at, and some parents and carers attending a meeting during the inspection were spoken to by inspectors. The evidence of this information indicates that of those expressing their views most are positive about the school. Some commented on their appreciation of recent developments. Others, however, expressed negative views on a range of different issues. The school is aware that a minority of parents and carers hold such views and are working to tackle this issue.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

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.



10 June 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of St Patrick's Catholic College, Stockton-on-Tees, TS17 9DE

Thank you very much for the time many of you spent talking to us when we inspected your school recently. I am delighted to be able to tell you that your school has improved and now provides you with a satisfactory quality of education. It no longer requires special measures. This is a considerable achievement by you and the staff in responding to the areas for improvement from the last inspection. Congratulations.

We found that improvements to the quality of teaching, the curriculum and the way that your progress is so thoroughly tracked through 'Praising Stars' has resulted in you making better progress so that it is now satisfactory and improving further. The standards you reach are above those reached nationally. You are contributing to this because you are keen to learn, do as you are asked, behave appropriately and respect each other and your teachers. Your attendance is above average.

Your school's leaders, especially your headteacher, senior leaders and those who are giving extra support are doing an effective job in improving it. There are some things we have asked them to do to help in this. We would like them to enable you all to make good progress by making sure that teaching in all lessons is as good as in the best. We would like them to provide more opportunities through the curriculum and other activities for you to take on responsibility, develop independence and show initiative and to develop other personal skills and knowledge of relevant issues. We have also asked that all of your school's leaders fully check how well the school is doing and use the information to help make sure that they take the very best action they can to improve the school further. Finally we have asked them to take steps to engage more with your parents and carers and the wider community.

You can help by continuing to work hard and by taking advantage of all opportunities provided for you. I send you and your teachers very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Joan McKenna
Lead inspector

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