

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Corsham

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126431
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	360082
Inspection dates	12–13 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Michael Bartleman

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Ferries
Headteacher	Rita McLoughlin
Date of previous school inspection	16 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons and observed eight different teachers. They held meetings with groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation relating to the school's self-evaluation, the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress, school policies, the school development plan, minutes of meetings of the governing body and the provision for safeguarding. There were 119 parents and carers questionnaires received and analysed.

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

- How effective is the quality of teaching in promoting learning and progress for all pupils?
- How effectively is the curriculum developed to raise attainment and to match pupils' interests and needs?
- To what extent is the school eliminating inequalities in achievement between different groups, taking into account pupils of different abilities and gender?
- The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management at all levels in tackling areas for improvement and taking decisive action to improve provision.

Information about the school

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School is a slightly smaller-than-average primary school. Most pupils come from a White British background, and there are very few pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. There have been considerable changes to the teaching staff and organisation since the last inspection, most notably a new headteacher and management team. The school has achieved the Healthy School Plus award and the Sing Up Gold award.

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

St Patrick's is a satisfactory school. It is now improving after an unsettled period during which both attainment and achievement fell. There are a number of good aspects to its work, not least the way in which it supports and guides its pupils to promote their personal development through a well-organised and memorable curriculum. Almost without exception, parents and carers are very supportive of the school and full of praise for the way in which the school takes care of their children. One parent summed up the common view saying, 'St Patrick's is wonderful; it is like one big family. Every child is seen as a gift and developed at their own pace.'

The relatively new headteacher has been decisive and has introduced initiatives which, combined with other management developments, have resulted in clear improvements, which are beginning to have an impact throughout the school. Pupils' attainment is average when they leave the school and progress overall is satisfactory. There is some inconsistency in attainment and progress in Years 3 to 6, especially in mathematics and writing. This is because teachers do not always build effectively on pupils' prior learning. The school has maintained other strengths. Pupils remain well behaved, enjoy their education and have enthusiastic attitudes. Their attendance is good and they, and their parents and carers, feel that they are safe in school.

Good relationships abound in this friendly and welcoming school, and pupils cooperate well with each other. They enjoy taking responsibility and have a good involvement with the local community. National and international links are in the early stages of development and this restricts pupils' multicultural awareness.

School self-evaluation is increasingly effective because the headteacher, staff and governors have introduced systems which give them an accurate and realistic understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The governing body is determined to play a more active and challenging role in the management of the school. This balance of strengths and recent developments in an improving school indicates a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

The introduction of rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning by the headteacher has led to improved teaching. Teachers manage classes effectively and are well supported by teaching assistants. However, there is inconsistency in the pace of lessons, and as a result learning is sometimes too slow, and there is insufficient expectation of what pupils can achieve. Teachers' marking, target setting and guidance to pupils on how they can improve are also inconsistent. The school gains from good partnerships and other links with service providers, which contribute strongly to pupils' good spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.

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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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment more consistently in English (particularly writing) and mathematics by:
 - using assessment information to plan appropriate and challenging tasks
 - ensuring that teaching consistently moves learning at a good pace and that pupils remain fully involved in the learning
 - ensuring teachers check pupils' progress regularly and take swift action to tackle underachievement.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership, management and governance in driving improvement by:
 - involving all levels of leadership in evaluating all aspects of the school's work
 - ensuring a consistent approach to data collection, tracking, moderation and self-evaluation
 - analysing the reasons for pockets of underachievement, especially for more-able pupils and for girls in mathematics, and implementing consistent teaching strategies that build confidence and understanding
 - eliminating inconsistencies in provision between classes and year groups.
- Increase opportunities through which all pupils are able to develop their knowledge and understanding of a multicultural society.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Children enter the school with attainment which is broadly average. The attainment of pupils in the last three years in Year 6 has been broadly average but there have been some inconsistencies in Years 3 to 6. This inspection indicates that the school has taken effective steps to remedy the situation but initiatives have been introduced too recently to fully impact on results. In Year 6 in 2010., some more- able pupils did not reach their potential. This is because some teaching does not build effectively enough on previous learning. The great majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are making satisfactory progress.

Learning is supported by the very positive attitudes of pupils, who are keen to learn even when activities are limiting. Year 2 pupils, for example, were seen to be totally absorbed in their research activities into animals. Pupils respect their teachers, whom they describe as 'friendly', and say about their school, 'There is a really nice atmosphere.' They report that there are no incidents of bullying. Their consistently good attendance demonstrates their enjoyment of school. They have a good knowledge of healthy lifestyles, as shown by the school's Healthy Schools Plus award. Pupils are improving their basic skills satisfactorily and their personal qualities well in preparation for their future. Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident in their good behaviour, their respect for

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each other and their willingness to discuss and accept other religions as well as their appreciation of art, music and nature.

Historical inconsistencies in the rate of progress between classes and year groups have left teachers in Year 6 with too much to do to make up the deficits in learning, especially for some more-able pupils. Work is in hand to address this. Lesson observations show that pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts is sometimes insecure because learning has not been built on solid foundations and some pupils, especially girls, lack confidence. This was evident when some Year 6 pupils were confused about how to solve word problems. In a Year 4 mathematics lesson, insufficient challenge for the more-able pupils led to their completing tasks quickly and easily. By contrast, pupils in a Year 5 lesson made good progress in English because the teacher adjusted the tasks effectively to take account of pupils' misconceptions and used these to move learning forward.

Pupils take part with great enthusiasm in the wide range of clubs and other activities that the school provides. They enjoy taking responsibility, for example as playground buddies, prefects, new pupil supporters and caring for younger ones during lunch breaks. Pupils are involved well in the wider community, and are developing their knowledge of social and environmental issues. Behaviour in lessons is consistently good and often exemplary, but a few pupils expressed concerns about the behaviour of others at playtime. Close links with the church and local community make an important contribution to pupils' all-round development.

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	3
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	2

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

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How effective is the provision?

Good relationships between pupils and adults contribute to the positive learning environment. As a result, classrooms are calm and pupils are keen and enthusiastic about their learning. Lesson planning is generally detailed but tasks are not always matched well enough to the different abilities within each class, and sometimes lack sufficient challenge. Occasionally, explanations are too lengthy, with pupils spending too long on the carpet listening to adults. In these lessons, the pace of learning is too slow and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to contribute their ideas. Although most teachers use questioning well, a few miss opportunities to challenge pupils sufficiently by enabling them to fully explain their answers. There is good team work between teachers and teaching assistants, who take an active part in lessons and increasingly are deployed to challenge the more able. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers as a result of the improving support they receive.

Although the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, an increasing proportion is good. This is because senior leaders, especially the headteacher, are monitoring rigorously and offering significant support and guidance on the development of teaching skills. New assessment procedures have been introduced that are helping teachers to acquire a sharper understanding of each pupil's level of attainment. Teachers are beginning to use this assessment information more effectively. Some teachers make effective use of pupils' targets to focus their learning in lessons but this is inconsistent. There is also variation in the usefulness of teachers' marking in identifying the next steps in learning. In the good lessons, teachers keep pupils tightly focused on the purpose of the learning and check their understanding at regular intervals. Where this does not happen, progress is less secure.

The good, broad and balanced curriculum is having an increasingly positive impact on pupils' enjoyment and personal development. It is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including a high number of visits, including residential visits, sporting activities and regular visiting artists who spend time in the school developing high quality artwork with the pupils. Art and singing are strengths of the school and it is no surprise that the school has achieved the national Sing-Up Gold award. A themed curriculum is well established and is being constantly updated to provide increased stimulus for writing. Much of this helps the development of pupils' spiritual, moral and social education, but there are too few opportunities for the planned development of pupils' cultural education. Although there are signs of improvement in pupils' achievement in writing, there are still too few opportunities for pupils to write independently and at length across a range of subjects. In mathematics, the school has trialled teaching pupils in ability sets, which is enabling teachers to meet pupils' needs more effectively.

The school's caring ethos is evident. Effective liaison with external agencies ensures good support and guidance for pupils who are potentially vulnerable and those with specific additional needs, who are receiving increasingly effective targeted support. This promotes personal development well. The school has good systems in place to promote transition to secondary education, which helps pupils to make well-informed choices about their future.

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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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has undergone significant staff changes over the past two years. However, this has been managed well by the aspirational headteacher who has made a good start to building a management team who share her ambitions for continued improvement. Priorities are well focused on the learning and personal development of pupils. The monitoring of teaching and learning is increasingly effective but rests mainly on the shoulders of the headteacher. A number of initiatives have been introduced which have resulted in improvements to the quality of teaching. However, the school knows that leaders and teachers do not make full use of information from assessments to speed up pupils' progress. Challenging targets for pupils are realistic, and the school is reflective in its self-evaluation. The governing body, led by a thoughtful and knowledgeable chair, is supportive and governors are regular visitors into the school. Governors are becoming more proactive and have robust procedures which enable them to challenge leaders more than in the past. Systems to safeguard pupils and their impact on pupils' health and safety are satisfactory. The school satisfactorily promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination, and gaps in attainment between groups are closing. However, this has not yet had sufficient impact, for example on the attainment of more-able pupils.

The school has built a good range of partnerships, especially with the local high schools, the Corsham Partnership, the local Catholic diocese of schools, and a number of sporting and family support groups. There is good engagement with parents and carers, as shown by the turnout during the inspection for 'golden assembly'. The contribution to community cohesion is promoted satisfactorily by the school, but leaders are aware that pupils' knowledge and their understanding of cultural diversity are underdeveloped.

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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	3
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	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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle quickly and benefit from well-structured routines and organisation that help them to feel safe and secure and excited about coming to school. They behave well, are well aware of routines and know what is expected of them. This is because adults are good at promoting their personal development and well-being. Children make good progress in learning sounds and letters as a result of good teaching and the well-structured programme in place, which is particularly effective in giving these young children the required building blocks for success in their future reading and writing. There is an improving balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities across all areas of learning, with children benefiting from more opportunities that promote independence, investigati

on and their communication skills. For example, children were seen during the inspection working together planning a camping expedition using tents, canoes and sleeping bags. This developed language well. They worked collaboratively together, taking turns and sharing resources. Children respond well to the teacher-led activities. Regular observations and assessments are made but not fully utilised to provide and develop learning opportunities to increase progress. Tracking shows development over time is satisfactory and children enjoy their time in this caring environment. However, there are missed opportunities to link observations of what children are doing to their next steps in learning. This means that children's progress is satisfactory overall rather than good. Although the outside area has been developed recently it does not promote learning effectively across all areas of learning. Adults miss many opportunities to develop the children's vocabulary and number skills through careful use of questioning.

By the end of Reception the large majority of children achieve most of what is expected in all areas of learning. The provision is satisfactorily led and managed and the adults work

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well together as a team. Care is taken to guarantee that all children are equally involved, with safety and safeguarding being given high priority.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The return rate of the questionnaire was above average. Most parents and carers are supportive of the school's work. Almost all agreed that their children enjoy school, are kept safe and helped to have a healthy lifestyle. Most are happy with their children's experiences at school. A few raised concerns about the amount of progress that their children make. Inspectors confirm that there have been variations in progress rates but that the school is working to overcome this, with early signs of success. A very small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns about how the school communicates with them and responds to suggestions they make or concerns they have, and this was raised with senior leaders. A similar proportion expressed concerns about how parents and carers are helped to support their children with their learning. There were many written comments in support of the school. These included the helpfulness of staff, communication between school and home, relationships and the recent improvements in the school. These positive comments are confirmed by inspection findings.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Patrick's Catholic Primary 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 119 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 201 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	72	61	46	39	0	0	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	80	67	38	32	0	0	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	61	51	50	42	7	6	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	64	54	41	34	9	8	5	4
The teaching is good at this school	66	55	50	42	2	2	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	63	53	43	36	11	9	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	69	58	46	39	2	2	2	2
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)	70	59	42	35	1	1	4	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	61	51	47	39	7	6	4	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	58	49	56	47	4	3	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	50	42	55	46	8	7	6	5
The school is led and managed effectively	73	61	38	32	6	5	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	75	63	35	29	8	7	1	1

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.



16 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Corsham SN13 9HS

Thank you all for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We were so pleased that you told us how much you enjoy school, especially all your residential trips and the exciting curriculum. It was also good to hear how you like taking responsibility, particularly how older pupils like looking after younger children. You go to a school that provides you with a satisfactory education. You are well looked after by all the adults, and by the time you leave in Year 6 your attainment is usually about what it should be for your age.

We think that you are polite and friendly and get on very well with your teachers and their assistants. You know how to keep safe and healthy and know that you can always turn to an adult if you have a problem. We judge that your headteacher has made a good start and that the school is improving all the time. We are very pleased that your parents and carers like the school as well.

We have suggested ways in which we think the school can continue to improve.

- Increase your progress in writing and mathematics so you are able to reach higher standards.
- Make sure that all governors and staff work together successfully to improve your school.
- Increase opportunities through which you can develop greater knowledge and understanding of a multicultural society.

We are sure that you can help by telling your teachers when you need help or do not understand how to improve your work.

Yours sincerely

Michael Bartleman

Lead inspector

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