

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Corby

Inspection report

Unique reference number	122045
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	380390
Inspection dates	5–6 July 2012
Lead inspector	David Wynford-Jones

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	248
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sharon Ogwang
Headteacher	Louise Blair
Date of previous school inspection	13 November 2008
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

David Wynford-Jones

Additional Inspector

Aileen King

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 16 lessons, observing nine teachers. They heard some pupils in Years 2 and 6 read. Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection; they observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including the data the school has collected on pupils' attainment and progress, procedures for keeping pupils safe and the school development plan. Inspectors analysed 51 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, together with those from staff and pupils.

Information about the school

St Patrick's Catholic Primary is average in size for a primary school. The majority of the pupils are of White British origin. However, the proportion of pupils from other minority ethnic backgrounds is considerably higher than average. Most are of African heritage. There are smaller numbers from a range of other cultures. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average. A few are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils who are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, and the proportion joining or leaving the school part way through the school year, are slightly higher than average. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed in January 2012. They were previously members of the senior leadership team. There were two interim headteachers between January 2011 and December 2011.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school that has the capacity to improve. Following a decline in pupils' performance, standards are now rising. It is not yet good because teaching and the use of assessment information are not good enough to promote good achievement in English and mathematics. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' skills in writing are developing well but are not consolidated in other subjects. Pupils do not have a broad understanding of mathematical terminology, and are not confident when undertaking problem-solving activities.
- Teaching is satisfactory. There is some good teaching on which the school can build, but not all teachers make the best use of assessment information to plan lessons in detail, or to identify challenging outcomes for pupils with differing abilities. Some lessons do not proceed at a quick enough pace and questioning techniques are not always used effectively to enhance learning. There are some good examples of helpful marking, but this too is inconsistent.
- Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory, and their attendance is above average. Pupils are compliant and are developing a positive attitude to learning. In some lessons they behave well. Their understanding of personal safety is satisfactory.
- Most senior leaders are relatively recent appointments. They are working closely with the governing body to update systems and structures. An accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development has led to improvements, especially in writing and in the quality of teaching. Staff at all levels are not yet making full use of information and communication technology to monitor attainment and progress and to improve the quality of teaching.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in mathematics and consolidate the improvements made in writing by:
 - placing a greater focus on promoting pupils' understanding of mathematical terminology and developing their skills in undertaking mathematical investigations
 - making certain that all pupils regularly practise and extend their writing skills in different subjects across the curriculum
 - ensuring that marking consistently provides pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their work.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to at least good by ensuring that:
 - all lesson planning matches the best practice in meeting pupils' needs
 - teachers consistently use assessment information to identify challenging outcomes for pupils of different abilities
 - all lessons proceed at a good pace and engage pupils in their learning
 - teachers use questioning strategies effectively.

- Develop the skills of the governing body, senior leaders and teaching staff in analysing assessment data and in evaluating the impact of teaching on pupils' learning.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge broadly in line with those expected for their age. They settle quickly and grow in confidence. They are developing their skills satisfactorily in all areas of learning. By the end of Year 6 standards are average in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents satisfactory achievement. Lesson observations and scrutiny of assessment data and pupils' work show that most pupils are making satisfactory progress in reading and writing. In mathematics it is less secure. Standards at the end of each key stage are higher than last year, and are in line with age-related expectations. However, they are not as high as at the time of the last inspection. There are slight variations in performance between different groups of pupils. Boys, particularly those of White British background, do not do as well as girls in reading and writing. This is being tackled and the gap is closing. Pupils who speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers. Nearly all the parents and carers who returned the questionnaires felt that their children are developing their key skills well. Inspectors found that whilst some pupils are beginning to make more rapid progress, it is not yet good.

Reading is promoted satisfactorily, and attainment by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is

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average. Most pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the different ways to read unfamiliar words, including the use of phonics (the sounds that letters make). However, older pupils do not use their phonic knowledge sufficiently confidently when tackling unknown words.

Pupils' progress in writing is more consistent. This is because teachers ensure pupils know their targets, and provide advice in their marking to address shortcomings. They provide good opportunities for pupils to draft and evaluate their work. Teachers provide pupils with a framework for their writing tasks and ensure they write for a range of purposes. Pupils regularly undertake extended written activities which are assessed against the National Curriculum level descriptors. However, teachers do not routinely remind pupils of their targets – for example in the use of punctuation, adventurous vocabulary and the inclusion of metaphors and similes – when undertaking writing tasks in other subjects. Dictionaries and thesauri are not used as a matter of routine.

In mathematics, pupils are developing their basic number skills satisfactorily. Most have a reasonable understanding of numbers and basic operations such as addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. However, the majority of pupils lack confidence when asked to apply their mathematical knowledge in problem solving-situations and their understanding and use of a wide range of terminology are limited. For example, in a Year 5 lesson pupils were unable to use mathematical terminology correctly to describe a range of triangles and were hesitant when measuring angles. Some were did not know how to use a protractor correctly. Marking does not consistently provide pupils with clear guidance to improve their mathematical work.

Quality of teaching

Teaching in most lessons is satisfactory. No inadequate teaching was observed during the inspection. Scrutiny of school documentation indicates an improving picture, following a period when inconsistencies in teaching and senior leadership had contributed to a steady decline in performance by the end of Year 6. Teaching tends to be consistently stronger in the Nursery, Reception and Year 6, where there are examples of good practice on which the school can build. In the Early Years Foundation Stage good use is made of the outdoor areas as natural extensions of the classroom.

Teachers consistently share the purpose of each lesson and list success criteria by which pupils can structure their learning. However, teachers do not routinely set clear targets for pupils of different abilities. As a result, some pupils, particularly the more able, are not always challenged. Most lessons feature appropriate use of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning. Teachers use questioning strategies satisfactorily. However, they do not always ask supplementary questions to check pupils' understanding and challenge their thinking.

The quality of lesson planning is very variable. Most plans are too brief and do not

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include targets for pupils of different abilities or identify opportunities to assess pupils' learning. Subject-specific terminology is not usually listed. As a result, for example in mathematics, pupils' understanding and use of terminology are not promoted effectively. Occasionally, the lack of detailed planning results in the lesson lacking pace, particularly at the start and end of the lesson. Pupils spend too long sitting on the carpet and are not active learners. Adult support in most classes is usually deployed well to help individuals, especially disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Appropriate provision for children at the early stages of learning English, especially in the Nursery and Reception classes, helps them to be included in school life and to make progress similar to their peers.

Teachers act as good role models to promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They provide opportunities for pupils to reflect, develop their social skills and celebrate other cultures. The recent emphasis placed on the teaching of phonics in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 is proving effective in raising attainment in reading.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most pupils have positive attitudes towards school but have yet to develop the skills of taking responsibility for their own learning. They show respect for each other, staff and visitors alike. In lessons which capture their interest they behave well. For example, pupils behaved well while watching a visiting theatre company's production of *The Railway Children* and showed respect to the actors. Pupils confirm that incidents of inappropriate behaviour, for example fighting and rudeness, and different sorts of bullying such as name-calling, are rare. They say that if an incident occurs, it is dealt with swiftly and fairly by staff. There have been no reported racist incidents since the last inspection.

Pupils have a secure understanding of personal safety. They say they feel safe in school and know whom to approach if they are worried or concerned. This was confirmed by the parental response to the questionnaire. Nearly all respondents stated their children behave appropriately, feel safe at school and are well looked after. Children's confidence in the safety of their environment is typified by some children in the Nursery. They engaged the inspector in conversation, whilst others invited him to join them in their activities and play 'catch the bean bag'.

Leadership and management

The governing body has managed the lack of stability in the senior leadership team satisfactorily. It has worked with the local authority and the diocese to recruit a headteacher and to update policies and procedures. The governing body provides an appropriate balance between challenge and support, and ensures that procedures for keeping pupils safe meet requirements. The Chair of the Governing Body works closely with the senior leadership team and shares the vision to bring about improvements in teaching and raising attainment. The school development plan, based on a realistic evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses, clearly

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addresses the right priorities. Actions are appropriate and linked to improving standards. Progress is monitored and evaluated on a regular basis.

Senior leaders understand their roles and responsibilities and are increasingly becoming more effective. Staff have responded positively to initiatives to improve their performance through focused training opportunities. The focus on monitoring attainment, progress and improving the quality of teaching is proving effective in raising standards. Staff are increasingly held to account for the progress pupils make. Changes are appreciated by parents and carers. Several wrote praising recent improvements. However, the governing body, senior staff and teachers have still to make best use of the information and communication technology to track and analyse pupils' performance, to raise expectations and to challenge pupils to reach higher standards. Nevertheless, pupils' performance is adequately monitored and any possible issue of discrimination is quickly addressed to ensure equality of opportunity for all.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and promotes pupils' learning, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, satisfactorily. The thematic approach provides pupils with a range of opportunities to link their learning in different subjects. For example, following the visit of the Olympic torch to Corby, teachers linked pupils' work in history, geography and design and technology. The curriculum is suitably modified to meet the needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and is enhanced by a suitable range of after-school activities, visits and visitors to the school. The clear vision for the school's development, the systems in place and the progress made over the last 18 months demonstrate that it has the capacity to improve further.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



9 July 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Corby NN18 9NT

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school, and for completing the questionnaire. Special thanks to the members of the school council who spoke to my colleague, and to those of you who read to us. It has been a really busy week for you with the inspection and your educational visits to the zoo. We hope you all enjoyed the production of *The Railway Children* and the School Fete. You told us that you enjoy school and feel safe. We were pleased to see that your attendance is above average. We saw you behave well at times, especially when you get involved in your learning. Overall, behaviour is satisfactory.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. By the end of Year 6, your attainment is broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents satisfactory progress during your time at the school.

We have asked the school to help you to make quicker progress and reach higher standards, especially in writing and mathematics, by making certain that:

- you are given more opportunities to undertake mathematical investigations and to develop your understanding of mathematical terminology
- you are reminded to consolidate and extend your writing skills in other lessons
- marking consistently provides you with clear guidance to improve your work
- lesson planning always identifies targets that are just right for you
- lessons move at a quick pace, and teachers use questioning strategies effectively
- the governing body, senior leaders and teaching staff develop their skills in analysing assessment information and in checking how effective the teachers are in helping you learn.

Please remember that to make your school better, you must always try your best.

Yours sincerely

David Wynford-Jones
Lead inspector

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