

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

Littledale Avenue, Heysham, Morecambe, LA3 2ER

Inspection dates

25–26 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Pupils' make too little progress and standards of attainment in reading and writing are low, particularly for boys.
- After several years of falling results at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, improvements in 2012 are fragile. Recent gains in pupils' progress are not being sustained in all classes.
- Although teaching is improving it is too variable in quality. It is not good enough to help pupils make up gaps in their learning, particularly in reading and writing. Work is not always planned at the right level.
- Leaders and managers are not precise enough when they judge the effect of teaching on pupils' learning.
- Further training and support is needed to help subject leaders develop their roles in checking and improving teaching so that pupils' progress improves.
- Attendance remains poor despite the school's concerted effort to improve it. This is why behaviour and safety are not good even though pupils behave well in school.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are safe, well cared for and get on well together.
- Leaders and governors are acting with urgency and the pace of improvement has stepped up recently with support from the local authority. Governors provide effective support and challenge to the headteacher.
- Teachers are keen to improve and take on further training.
- Children settle well into the Reception class because induction arrangements are good.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' books helps them to improve. Teaching assistants provide valuable support for learning.
- All staff understand what needs to be done to improve teaching and recent steps taken are beginning to have an effect.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with staff, members of the governing body and a representative from Lancashire local authority.
- Inspectors took into account seven responses from parents to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as one letter from a parent and an e-mail from another. They met some parents informally at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors observed teaching in each class and made a judgement about the teaching in 15 lessons. In addition, they saw an assembly, observed groups taught by teaching assistants and observed breaks and lunchtimes. The headteacher conducted two joint observations with an inspector.
- Inspectors heard three groups of pupils read and met with two groups of pupils to gather their views about the school. They also looked at the responses from the school's own survey of pupils' views.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents including the improvement plan, the school's analysis of its information about pupils' progress.

Inspection team

David Law, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Robert Birtwell

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- St Patrick's Catholic Primary is an average sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding) is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Around half of the pupils are of Irish Traveller or Romany Gypsy heritage. The proportion of pupils from these groups has increased over the last three years. Most other pupils are White British.
- There are frequent changes to the school population as many pupils join or leave the school at different times of the year.
- For three years up to and including 2011, the school did not meet the government's floor standards (these are the minimum standards and rate of progress expected of primary pupils). However, unvalidated results for 2012 indicate that these standards have been met.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so it is consistently good or better by:
 - making better use of time in lessons so learning moves at a quicker pace
 - making sure that work is at the right level for pupils' of different abilities
 - providing teachers with more training in how to develop pupils' reading and writing skills.
- Improve pupils' progress in reading and writing, particularly for boys by:
 - targeting support for families of pupils with low attendance
 - using a step by step approach to developing key skills in handwriting, spelling and punctuation
 - increasing pupils' ability to use and apply their reading skills in other subjects
 - teaching older pupils the skill of reading between the lines and to read with greater understanding
 - building pupils' stamina as writers so they are more confident in writing at length.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - strengthening skills in judging the impact each teacher has on pupils' learning and using this information to set targets for teachers' further training and support
 - ensuring senior leaders provide more support for subject leaders to develop their leadership skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Since the previous inspection, pupils' attainment at the end of Years 2 and 6 has fallen year-on-year. Although recent improvements in 2012 have brought attainment to average levels, such gains are not secure. The school's recent information on pupils' achievement shows that progress is quicker in some areas of learning but this is not the case in all classes. Too many pupils do not make enough progress, for example boys in reading and writing and some pupils with special educational needs.
- Children start in Reception with skills, knowledge and understanding below those typical for their age. They settle well into routines and play happily together. This positive start to learning helps most to make steady progress but is not built on as pupils move through the school.
- By the end of Year 2, attainment for most pupils is low and progress across Key Stage 1 is too slow even though pupils do better in Year 2. Until the improvement in 2012, standards in reading had been falling for three years. Many pupils now in Years 1 and 2 lack confidence as readers and often struggle to use their knowledge of letters and sounds well enough.
- Pupils' progress is also patchy across Key Stage 2, being fastest in Year 6. For example, Year 6 pupils applied themselves well in a writing lesson but still struggled with handwriting, punctuation and grammar. Pupils show little stamina as writers and find it difficult to draft longer pieces of work.
- Too many older pupils do not read fluently or with expression. Their understanding of the meaning of texts is limited. This limits their ability to read widely across subjects of the curriculum. Many boys are reluctant to read.
- Achievement in mathematics is stronger than in English. However, some pupils find it difficult to understand key ideas such as place value or to recall key number facts. For example, in one Key Stage 2 lesson, many pupils became confused about the value of digits when using decimals and others could not remember multiplication facts.
- Poor attendance for a significant number of pupils impedes progress. This leaves gaps in learning and teaching is not strong enough to help them catch up quickly. The inspection monitoring report of October 2011 said that progress was too slow to help close gaps in pupils' skills and understanding. This is still the case in English although gains in mathematics are more secure.
- The achievement of some pupils with special educational needs is better in Key Stage 1 than it is in Key Stage 2. Similarly, Traveller and Gypsy Roma pupils do better in some classes than in others. Those known to be eligible for the pupil premium tend to reach higher standards of attainment than others but only in some classes.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- There is some good teaching but too little to ensure pupils make enough progress over time. This inconsistency in teaching quality means that the rate of pupils' learning is too variable and they underachieve. The local authority's and headteacher's records of teaching quality show that it has been weaker in the past and is improving.
- In all classrooms, relations between pupils and teachers are positive and behaviour is managed well. In the better lessons, particularly in Year 2 and Year 6, teachers are skilful at asking the right questions to test pupils' understanding.
- Most pupils listen quietly and make an effort in their learning. However, in too many lessons time is not used well and teachers spend too long talking to pupils who remain passively listening. This slows the rate at which pupils gain skills and understanding and some become restless and inattentive.
- Recent training has helped teachers to improve lesson planning and there is now a common approach. Nonetheless, the work is not always at the right level for individuals and groups of pupils. So, some pupils find work too hard and some find it too easy.

- Teaching assistants often make a good contribution to pupils' learning, for example by listening to pupils read.
- The school has revised the system for marking pupils' books and all teachers are acting on this. There are some examples of good marking. Pupils say they find the marking comments helpful but admit they do not always read them.
- When pupils are heard reading they show they have been taught about letters and the sounds that they make (phonics) but too often they are unsure how to apply this knowledge to books they are less familiar with and do not understand what it is they are reading about.
- Pupils are taught how to write for different purposes but their presentation is poor, where teachers expect too little. Not enough has been done to train teachers in how best to develop pupils' reading and writing skills, particularly those of boys.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- Attendance is well below the national average and too many pupils have a lot of time off school. The school thoroughly checks out reasons for absence and is working hard with parents and families to encourage good attendance. Despite some recent improvement, this low attendance affects pupils' progress and means that behaviour and safety requires improvement.
- The school is orderly and most pupils conduct themselves well. They are usually considerate of others. The inspection started on a very rainy day and pupils' behaviour was good when they had to stay indoors during a wet playtime.
- Pupils from different backgrounds get on well together and show interest in different cultures and traditions.
- Pupils feel safe and have a reasonable awareness of how to keep safe. Parents say they feel confident in the level of care at the school. Pupils report that bullying is rare but there is some name calling. When such incidents happen pupils are confident adults will help them.
- When given the chance, pupils are keen to take on responsibility and enjoy doing jobs in the classroom, often co-operating well when they do. For example, the Reception children are good at tidying away. In lessons, pupils usually work well with each other but when teachers talk for too long they become distracted.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders and governors are working to improve teaching through setting higher expectations of staff. The appointment of new governors has given governance impetus and the pace of improvement has quickened in the last school year. Underachievement remains, however, as a result of weaker teaching in the past and some that still requires improvement. Further training has improved lesson planning and marking. Despite this, work is not always at the right level to help pupils make the rapid improvement needed.
- Methods to check on the quality of teaching and learning are now established with lessons observed regularly. Monitoring is done to an agreed plan, a key feature of which is the scrutiny of pupils' books. Evaluations of what such checks show are not sharp enough and do not focus sufficiently on the impact each teacher has on pupils' learning, neither is such information used to set targets for teachers' further training and support.
- All senior leaders understand what needs to be done. Plans for improvement are clear and everyone wants to see achievement and teaching improve. Leaders see the urgency of what needs to be done; advances have been made but not rapidly enough to get rid of the weaknesses in pupils' achievement.
- There have been some improvements in achievement recently, halting the sharp fall in standards since the last inspection. Examples include improvement in mathematics and better results at the end of Years 6 and 2 this year. Together with recent improvements in teaching, this shows the school is able to continue improving.
- Senior leaders have not done enough to promote stronger leadership from other staff. Despite their commitment to their leadership role subject leaders have had too little impact so far on

improving pupils' attainment. There are regular meetings to review pupils' progress but too little opportunity for teachers to compare the work in pupils' books across different classes.

- The headteacher, in consultation with governors, has made better use of teachers' individual skills by allocating them to certain classes. However, teachers in job-share arrangements have too little dedicated time to work together during the school day to plan for continuity in pupils' learning.
- At the last full inspection the school was asked to strengthen links with parents and this has been successfully achieved. The homework scheme is supporting parents to help their children learn. There is good guidance for parents whose children have complex learning needs and one parent was full of praise for this.
- The school fosters good relations between all groups of pupils and tackles discrimination but, although this promotes equal opportunity to learn, underachievement is present across all groups. However, the pupil premium has been used wisely to provide additional support for those who need it and is closing the gap between this group and all pupils.
- The local authority has provided intensive support but the school is not too dependent on this. The level of support has been reduced as improvement is seen.
- The curriculum provides valuable opportunities for pupils to visit places of interest and pupils say how much they enjoy this. The school's commitment to its faith, which can be seen in assembly and during prayer, supports pupils' spiritual, moral and social development well.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors aspire to improve learning for all groups of pupils and act in support of the headteacher while also providing challenge. They have a good knowledge of the Gypsy Roma and Traveller cultures in the community. The governing body meets its statutory duties and is well informed about safeguarding requirements. Governors have a secure grasp of what needs to improve and have acted promptly to bring about improvements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupil's needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupil's needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	119583
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	401854

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	176
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Theresa Moore
Headteacher	Carol Hind
Date of previous school inspection	5 May 2010
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