

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

Lacock Road, Corsham, SN13 9HS

Inspection dates 13–14 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Senior leaders and governors are highly effective in driving improvements. Much headway has been made since the previous inspection and pupils across the school are now making good progress.
- Pupils' rate of progress has improved because the teaching is better. In most lessons, work is pitched at the right level for different groups of pupils, enabling them to build well on their starting points.
- Pupils enjoy school, behave well and are keen to learn. They readily help one another out and willingly cooperate when working in groups.
- Pupils feel safe and valued, and appreciate the way adults care for them. They benefit from a wide range of clubs and other activities that support their learning and personal development.
- School leaders keep a sharp eye on the quality of teaching and how well pupils are getting on. They are quick to spot things that need improving. They set ambitious targets, carefully plan how to meet them and, when needed, arrange further training for staff.
- Governors are fully involved in reviewing the school's performance and provide insightful guidance and support.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils make better progress and reach higher standards in reading than in writing. Although pupils generally read widely and often, this is not always evident in the way they structure their writing or in the vocabulary they use.
- In some lessons, the level of work is either too easy or too hard for some pupils and there are missed opportunities for pupils to deepen their thinking and understanding.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons, four of which were joint observations with the headteacher. They listened to pupils reading and discussed their reading habits and preferences with them.
- Inspectors discussed various aspects of the school with pupils and looked at a range of their work. They took account of the school's data on pupils' attainment and progress.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- During the inspection, inspectors took account of the 67 responses to the on-line Parent View survey and discussions with parents. They took account of the 18 questionnaires returned by staff.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents, including plans for improvement, teachers' plans, safeguarding arrangements, records relating to behaviour and attendance, governing body minutes and records of the school leaders' monitoring of lessons.

Inspection team

Rob Crompton Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Shela Rowan

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is broadly average in size. Most pupils are White British, with around 10% from minority ethnic groups. A few pupils speak English as an additional language, although none is at an early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, for whom the school receives additional funding through Pupil Premium, is below average. The school also receives additional funding for around 10% of the pupils because their parents serve in the armed forces. (The pupil premium provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, children of parents serving in the armed forces and for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.)
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported by school action is below average. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. These needs relate mainly to moderate learning difficulties.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in writing, so that it more closely matches that in reading by
 - encouraging pupils, when writing, to use some of the structures, phrases and vocabulary they encounter in their reading
 - extending opportunities for pupils to practise, consolidate and develop their writing skills in different subjects
 - ensuring pupils write as neatly and fluently as they can.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by ensuring consistency in:
 - setting challenging tasks for all groups of pupils, including the more able
 - the use of questions which extend and deepen pupils' thinking and understanding.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- When children enter the Reception class, their social, language and number skills are generally below those expected for their age. They make good progress so, by the end of Reception, levels of attainment are broadly average. Children develop particularly good attitudes to learning and talk confidently among themselves and with adults.
- Pupils' reading skills develop quickly. Daily phonics (letters and the sounds they make) teaching means they tackle new words with increased confidence. For example, when reading to inspectors, their systematic approach to reading unfamiliar words meant they built up 'whoops' and 'skates' and read them accurately. Older pupils read widely and fluently. One boy commented, 'I love reading. When I am enthralled with a book, I read all the time.'
- Pupils make good progress in writing, although their skills in writing develop at a slower rate than those in reading. Many older pupils show great flair. Writing as an evacuee, for example, one Year 6 pupil's account impressively included, 'As the train drove slowly away, I felt a tear roll down my cheek. My hands were aching from waving and my eyes were sore with crying. The view of my parents was fading. I could scarcely see their kind faces through my tears.' Not all pupils are as skilled in engaging the reader as they use a more limited range of sentence structure and vocabulary.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics has gathered momentum since the previous inspection. Pupils apply their secure basic number skills well when faced with complex mathematical problems. Pupils progressively acquire and use the correct mathematical language. For example, following an investigation into fractions, one Year 4 pupil showed a very secure understanding when she explained, 'When it's an improper fraction, the answer is always greater than 1. When it's an ordinary fraction it's never greater than 1.'
- The rate of progress made by pupils known to be eligible for free school meals broadly matches that of other pupils. Of the very few pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in Year 6 over the last two years, only one did not reach the expected levels in both English and mathematics. Children of service families generally make similar progress to their peers. Due to effective support, both within lessons and during small group sessions, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. Given their good progress these pupils are closing the gaps in attainment in both English and mathematics compared to other groups nationally.
- The way the school continuously seeks to ensure all pupils do well indicates a steadfast commitment to promoting equality of opportunity, fostering good relationships and tackling discrimination.

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The quality of teaching

is good

- Children in Reception respond eagerly to the wide range of activities on offer both indoors and outside. During one session, for example, all children were actively and purposefully engaged. Some were planting seeds; others were building with plastic bricks, while groups of four took turns to play an interactive phonics game on the laptop computers. Adults took every opportunity to engage children in conversation about their learning, and to promote their social skills and language development.
- Across the school, most lessons move at a brisk pace. After a brief introduction, pupils are set tasks based on their previous learning and levels of confidence. In the most effective lessons, teachers briefly stop the whole class at intervals and pose questions which challenge pupils to delve into their existing knowledge. This approach helps pupils to deepen their thinking and extend their understanding. Some lessons, on the other hand, do not provide such opportunities, which somewhat constrains progress, particularly that of the more-able pupils.
- Teachers are skilled in making links between subjects. For example, a lesson focusing mainly on prepositions in Year 5 included tasks relating to a picture by Degas and to their current study of

The Highwayman by Alfred Noyes. The teacher successfully encouraged pupils to draw on the structure and vocabulary of the poem, and pupils went on to produce some high quality poems of their own.

- Pupils often work in ability groups drawn from Years 5 and 6. This is very effective in ensuring that pupils are set tasks which challenge the more able and that those less confident are supported effectively. During one mathematics lesson with the top set, pupils rose to the challenge of finding formulae for complex number progressions and used algebraic expressions, such as $2n+2$. When asked to devise their own sequences, many included square numbers, decimals and fractions. In some lessons, particularly in Years 1 and 2, pupils are all given the same task which means some struggle and some find it too easy and sail through the work.
- Classroom displays celebrate pupils' achievement and include many prompts that help them see their next steps. This was evident as Year 3 pupils consulted a display showing progressive steps in punctuation in order to evaluate their own work and offer suggestions to classmates about how to improve.
- Pupils benefit from excellent feedback through teachers' marking. Teachers use symbols, such as a star for good work and a staircase for next steps, and establish a written dialogue with pupils, particularly those in the older classes. Comments such as, 'A lovely choice of verbs, chosen for impact – well done. Excellent use of simile. Next time try...' feature frequently in pupils' books. Comments on the quality of pupils' handwriting are less common, which means some pupils do not always present their work as neatly as they could.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They greet visitors warmly and politely, and are keen to discuss their work. Incidents of low-level disruption are rare and tend to occur only when pupils lose interest because lesson introductions are too long or the work is not challenging enough.
- Parents are confident that their children are kept safe and this was evident from the positive comments of pupils. Pupils have a strong awareness of all types of bullying. One pupil summed up their views with the comment, 'It never happens here because we help each other.'
- Playtimes take place almost entirely without incident and indeed pupils were observed helping one another out, for example, when someone tripped and fell. Pupils are well versed in keeping themselves safe, for example they are well aware of how social websites and mobile phones can be misused.
- The school has recently introduced a 'gemstones' scheme which promotes pupils' moral development and sets out expectations for behaviour. This is working well in helping pupils to reflect on their own attitudes and behaviour.
- The relaxed family ethos, underpinned by the school's core values, plays a significant part in promoting pupils' positive attitudes and spiritual development. This was clearly evident in the friendly and joyful atmosphere as pupils, staff, parents and governors joined together to celebrate the life of the school's patron saint.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is a driving force in the school and has led a successful drive to improve the school's effectiveness. She has harnessed the skills of the effective senior leaders and the governing body and, with their cohesive support, has brought significant improvement to teaching and pupils' progress. As a result, the school has improved significantly from being satisfactory in its previous inspection to being good now.
- The way school leaders monitor the quality of teaching is exemplary. Lessons are observed and evaluated against the statutory teachers' standards. Teachers spoke highly about how insightful feedback on their lessons helps them to improve. Helpful feedback is also given following 'learning walks' where leaders make brief visits to several classrooms. Teachers' overall

performance is considered, drawing on these observations, the meticulous analysis of assessment data and the level of work evident in pupils' books.

- Both staff and parents are very supportive of the leadership and acknowledge the rigour and clear direction that it brings to the school. Leaders accurately identify clear priorities for improvement. In order to ensure action planning is based on secure checks on how well it is doing, they have worked closely and successfully with a local authority consultant over the past year. This strategy has been beneficial to the school, in helping to identify and share successful teaching methods, provide further training if needed, and increase the rate of pupils' progress.
- The curriculum is well planned to stimulate and motivate pupils. Links across subjects and references to life outside school help make learning meaningful. Enrichment activities are extensive. In addition to sports clubs, activities include drama, dance, choir, science, genealogy, and engineering. Opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills, however, are patchy and are not always explicit in teachers' day-to-day planning.
- Staff provide strong role models in their relationships with one another. Activities such as Chinese and Mexican artwork and Spanish lessons, together with those reflecting their own traditional heritage, promote pupils' cultural and spiritual development effectively.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are highly effective in supporting school leaders in bringing about improvements. They gain accurate insights into the school's performance through carefully examining assessment information and comparing it to national figures. They are quick to follow up any anomalies emerging from, for example, assessment data or the recently introduced 'school dashboard'. They regularly consult with school leaders to seek assurance that the funding allocated through the pupil premium is used wisely. Governors pay close attention to how effectively staff with additional allowances perform. They regularly review their own effectiveness and keep very well informed through training and membership of national associations. They play a leading role in local governor groups.

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 pupils' 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 pupils' 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	126431
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	406365

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	186
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Ferries
Headteacher	Rita McLoughlin
Date of previous school inspection	12–13 May 2011
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