

# St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

Whitehouse Road, Bircotes, Doncaster, DN11 8EF

**Inspection dates** 2–3 October 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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 requires improvement. It is not good because

- Not enough pupils make good progress because teaching is not yet consistently good. Standards in English were markedly below those in mathematics in 2012.
- The work that the most able pupils are given in lessons and the questions teachers ask are not always challenging enough to explore and extend learning. Consequently, not all pupils who are capable of reaching the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics, do so.
- Weaknesses in teaching identified through the headteacher's monitoring have not been rigorously addressed. Work is not always marked in enough detail or as frequently as it should be.
- Until recently, the teaching of phonics (the links between letters and sounds) has not been good enough to raise standards in reading and writing through the school. Pupils have too little practice in mental calculation and this is holding back progress in numeracy.
- Activities to support children's literacy and numeracy in the Early Years Foundation Stage in the outside area are not always well-planned.
- Pupils too quickly become quietly inattentive and lose concentration in weaker lessons.
- The school improvement plan and the school's self evaluation statement lack clarity. Some targets are set too low, limiting their effectiveness as tools to improve the school.

### The school has the following strengths

- Governors are mostly new but able. They have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve the school.
- Individual teachers with leadership responsibilities, with good support from the local authority, have started several good initiatives to improve the school. They rightly enjoy the full confidence of the headteacher and governors.
- Standards in English improved significantly in 2013.
- The headteacher and staff have created a happy and friendly school.
- Pupils have many opportunities to develop confidence and self-esteem. They enjoy being at school, and say they feel safe.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 19 part-lessons across all age groups. All were seen jointly with the headteacher. Seven of the sessions dealt with the teaching of phonics.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, staff, pupils, and the Chair of the Governing Body. She held telephone conversations with the Vice Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector looked at a range of evidence including: the school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses; the school improvement plan; information from checks on pupils' progress; monitoring reports; the work pupils were doing in their books; and safeguarding documentation.
- The inspector listened to pupils read.
- Not enough responses were received to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) for an analysis to be made, but the views of parents at the school gate at the start and end of the school day were taken into account.
- The inspector considered the 14 responses received to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Ruth McFarlane, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is much smaller than the average primary school.
- Most year groups have around ten pupils on roll, sometimes fewer. Pupils are taught in four mixed-age classes: one for the Early Years Foundation Stage, one for pupils in Years 1 and 2, one for pupils in Years 3 and 4 and one for pupils in Years 5 and 6.
- Most of the pupils have White British heritages.
- Although numbers are very small, the proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well above the national average. This is additional funding to help certain groups of pupils, and in this school this is for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is above average.
- Average proportions of pupils are supported on school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- There were too few pupils in Year 6 in 2012, the latest year for which comparative data are available, to make a valid comparison of their attainment or progress against the government's floor standards.
- A new Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and some other new governors have recently been appointed.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that pupils' progress accelerates by:
  - improving planning so that the tasks set allow the more able, in particular, to make rapid progress and achieve the higher levels
  - developing teachers' questioning to explore and extend pupils' learning
  - managing pupils' behaviour in class more effectively to enable to best possible environment for learning
  - ensuring all work is marked regularly and marking offers clear guidance for pupils' next steps.
- Improve standards in literacy and numeracy by:
  - improving planning in the Early Years Foundation Stage outside learning area so that it supports children's literacy and numeracy development more effectively
  - ensuring high quality phonics sessions are part of the embedded routine of each class
  - increasing the frequency and quality of mental calculation sessions in all age groups.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that development points identified through lesson observations are followed up promptly and lead to improved teaching.
  - sharpening the focus of the self evaluation and development plan so that they can be used quickly and effectively to improve the school
  - making sure targets for teachers, pupils and the school's overall standards are all appropriately challenging
  - working with parents to ensure a concerted approach to improving pupils' learning attitudes.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Over time, too few pupils have made consistently good progress. For Year 2 and Year 6 in 2012, pupils' performance in reading and writing was much worse than in mathematics.
- Only about a third of Year 1 pupils in 2012 reached the expected standard in the phonics screening check, because phonics teaching was not properly developed in the school. As a result, reading and writing standards fell across the school. Pupils' reading standards are still below what is usual for their age despite strong improvement in 2013.
- Pupil numbers are too small for a valid comparison with national test results and progress levels. Individual checks show that most children enter the school with skills and abilities below those typically found. Year 6 results improved in 2013, as they have for pupils currently in the school, but standards remain slightly below those expected for most pupils nationally.
- Progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage fits the same picture. It is not good because teaching requires improvement; planning for activities in the outside area does not promote children's learning in literacy and numeracy sufficiently.
- In 2012 pupils did better in mathematics but few pupils reach the higher levels in any subject. The most able pupils do not make the gains they should through the school because work is not always planned to extend their thinking far enough. There remain weaknesses in pupils' skills in rapid recall of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division facts, because pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to practise them.
- Typically, in lessons, pupils settle down quickly to learn. However, some pupils cannot sustain their attention for long enough to get the best out of their lessons. Others sit quietly, not understanding, and do not ask the questions that would help them make the progress they need.
- The 2013 Year 2 and Year 6 results clearly show higher standards in both English and mathematics and a narrowing of the previous gaps. These gains are the direct result of recent improvements in teaching. The earlier pattern of underachievement has been securely reversed.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to support eligible pupils' learning and the gap is closing between their performance in English and mathematics and that of their peers. There are too few pupils in the cohort to enable a comparison of their attainment without identifying them.
- Pupils identified as disabled and those who have special educational needs make the same progress as their classmates as a result of the good plans teachers have put in place, the support they get from teaching assistants and frequent checks that are made on their learning.

### The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The work for many pupils, including the most able, is not challenging enough to ensure they make rapid improvements in their learning. Teachers' questions do not spark enough extension to pupils' learning. Consequently, rates of progress are held back.
- Teachers' marking is of variable quality. The best is regular and offers good pointers for

improvement and clear reference to pupils' levels, but in some books, several consecutive pages of work are not marked, denying the pupils valuable guidance.

- In the Early Years Foundation stage, there are too few opportunities used to promote children's literacy and numeracy skills fully in their outside learning area. Elsewhere, the teaching of literacy and numeracy is improving but the weekly sessions for the most able in mathematics fail to result in enough higher levels. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to practise mental mathematics. As a result, pupils cannot recall number facts speedily in problem-solving, and this slows up progress.
- Although teachers usually manage behaviour well, there are examples at all ages of pupils quietly not paying attention or failing to ask if they do not understand and these go largely unnoticed and unchecked.
- The quality of teaching overall has improved over the last eighteen months as teachers have begun to make better provision for the needs of each pupil within mixed-age classes. This has helped, in particular, the progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. These pupils are sensitively managed to ensure that they grow in confidence and, consequently, they are given the same opportunities to learn as other groups.
- Teaching assistants play a valuable role in aiding learning. Their involvement in presenting the new and much improved phonics programme has helped it get off to a strong start because they have been effectively trained in its key purposes and in its implementation.
- At its best, teaching includes high levels of challenge and engagement, such as in a session on Venn diagrams in the Year 1 and 2 class, where the outside area was in as much use as the inside, and work was very well matched to each ability so that pupils made rapid progress. The best examples of literacy teaching enable pupils to engage in plenty of talk about their plans for writing, and how they might meet their targets. However, these are recent improvements and not yet seen consistently across the school.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

### **requires improvement**

- Despite the efforts and commitment of staff, pupils' attitudes to their learning in lessons are not good enough and some pupils slow their own progress, either by being passive listeners and not asking questions or by quietly losing concentration and attention in lessons.
- The inspector confirmed the school's view that pupils' behaviour in and around school also requires improvement. Too frequently, pupils fail to listen courteously to others or let them finish what they are saying.
- In class, there is very little disruption to the learning of others because teachers usually manage behaviour well. Most pupils show courteous and considerate behaviour to adults and pupils asked think that behaviour is 'quite good' in school.
- Pupils say they feel 'very safe' at school and parents raised no concerns in discussions held at the school gate. The school is a happy and welcoming place where all feel valued. Bullying is very rare, is never serious and is dealt with effectively whenever minor cases occur. Pupils confirm that incidents are rare.
- Most pupils enjoy school and attend regularly.

## The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not had a consistently good impact on pupils' achievement since the previous inspection.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate but fails to elucidate why the school's performance is not good. The school improvement plan is awash with lists of data and targets but offers little to pinpoint how to improve performance. Some of the targets are set too low. Staff are consulted but not until after the headteacher has drawn up the main drafts.
- The management of teachers' performance lacks rigour. The most recent targets set for teachers are rightly challenging, but weaknesses identified previously have not been followed up. However, opportunities are provided through the good local partnership of schools, to observe and replicate best practice and this is why teaching is improving.
- The work of teachers with leadership responsibilities has been remodelled and is largely responsible for the sustained improvements over the last eighteen months. The impact has been a sharp increase in pupils' performance, especially in reading and writing. Support from the local authority has been strong, initiatives are well-led by managers and are now increasingly embedded across the school; this shows that the school is securely placed to continue on the upward path.
- The school is committed in its fight against any form of discrimination and harmonious relationships are at the heart of the school's ethos. The headteacher's strength is in the creation of a warm and friendly ethos throughout the school and development of pupils' confidence and self-esteem.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively. Small-group sessions from a bought-in specialist are enabling these pupils to accelerate their progress in phonics and numeracy.
- Improvements in teaching programmes are now leading to much improved learning. Interesting topics within the literacy programme, such as a chocolate theme around Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, for Years 5 and 6, excite pupils' interest and stimulate their learning. The frequent use of visits to support the work in school and a residential for older pupils help enrich the school-based learning.
- Plans for the use of the primary sports funding are good and provide for a wide range of recommended additional activities as well as family-based sports competitions. Plans have been drawn up to measure the impact of the new spending on pupils' physical development.
- The local authority has been very effective in stimulating improvements through encouraging the development of partnership activities and the work of staff with leadership responsibilities.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - New, able leaders of the governing body have established strong links with the local authority and diocesan personnel so that all are working together to improve the school.
  - Governors are acutely aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have embarked on holding leaders to account much more effectively. Their knowledge is based on first-hand experience and good understanding of the data about pupils' performance and progress, including that related to pupil premium spending.
  - Governors know how good teaching is and the effectiveness of the management of teachers'

performance, although there have not yet been opportunities for them to use this to reward good performance as targets set have not been fully met.

- Safeguarding procedures meet requirements to keep pupils safe.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	122816
<b>Local authority</b>	Nottinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	425037

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	94
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jenny Whelan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Stephen Dent
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 December 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01302 743145
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