



St Patrick's Roman Catholic Primary School, Thornaby

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111695
LEA Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number 278751
Inspection dates 3 May 2006 to 3 May 2006
Reporting inspector Carole Cressey

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to inspect any school in England. The inspection is to be treated as a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Westbury Street
School category	Voluntary aided		Thornaby
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Stockton-on-Tees, TS17 6NE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01642 676724
Number on roll	343	Fax number	01642 679454
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Gary Wilson
Date of previous inspection	1 November 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Swinhoe

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. In the course of the day the inspector visited every classroom, met with a range of staff and pupils and observed the school at work. The school's self-evaluation document was used as the starting point for the inspection. Discussion with parents, governors and the receipt of 162 questionnaires from parents further assisted the writing of this report.

Description of the school

St Patrick's Roman Catholic Primary school is located in Thornaby close to the centre of Stockton on Tees. Most pupils are White British with a very small proportion with a minority ethnic heritage. No pupil is at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The local area has a high level of social deprivation and is undergoing considerable regeneration. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The banner displayed in the school hall states 'Wonderful things happen at St Patrick's'. Children enter the nursery with standards well below average. They leave the school in Year 6 with academic, personal and social standards significantly above average. How wonderful is that!

The Catholic ethos of the school underpins all its work. This is a school that against all the odds provides an outstanding education for all its pupils. The school's success is due to the unremitting determination of the head teacher, staff and governors to accept nothing less than the very best from the pupils. Pupils are very proud of their school and parents are rightly confident their children are nurtured within the context of the Christian faith.

Pupils' personal and social development is so successful that by Year 6 all pupils including those with complex learning needs are confident enough to go on a weeklong visit to France or Holland. Pupils say this is a 'brilliant way' to prove to their teachers and families that they are independent, can look after themselves and can get on with each other without 'squabbling'. Managing their own money, ensuring they are clean and well turned out in appropriate clothes, and packing their own lunches provides pupils with excellent life skills. These visits have been so successful that in one European town there is a plaque to celebrate the excellent behaviour! Such behaviour is because the school makes it perfectly clear from day one in the nursery that anything less than excellent behaviour will not be tolerated. 'Nobody bullies or swears in this school' was the response of the school forum!

The importance of staying safe and healthy is evident throughout the school. The school knows that only if pupils are fit, healthy and emotionally secure will they be able to be effective learners. The breakfast club ensure pupils start the day with a full tummy. 'Brain gym', regular access to water and healthy snacks and lunches, excellent opportunities to engage in high quality sporting activities all contribute to pupils' well-being. The school also realises that it's beneficial to have treats and rewards. So the occasional chocolate biscuit is acceptable as a reward for working hard in the homework club, and a school picnic involving parent and carers is a wonderful way to celebrate pupils' first communion.

Pupils value the way staff encourage them to be self-critical and in charge of their own destiny. Everyone in St Patrick's is on an exciting journey from Nursery to Year 6. Year 6 pupils actually look forward to their national tests. These are not something to be afraid of but are seen as an opportunity to be grasped to show to themselves, their teachers, parents and the world what they have learned during their time at St Patrick's. As one pupil put it 'when we came into the nursery we hardly knew anything, now we know loads'.

The school is exceptionally caring and has high aspirations for all its pupils despite the many obvious barriers to learning. The quality of the teaching and learning is outstanding. The headteacher and the exceptionally skilled senior management team

very rigorously monitor lessons and mentor all adults involved in teaching the pupils. This is a school where to quote the Headteacher 'there is no place to hide'. The governors insist on only appointing those teachers who meet the school's very high professional standards.

Classrooms are organised to be treasure chests of information. Displays show the high standards pupils reach in all aspects of their work and provide them with a wealth of clues and strategies to help them succeed. Pupils have a very high regard for their teachers and as one said, 'teachers make learning fun and are always prepared for our lessons and they know we all learn in different ways'.

At St Patrick's learning is brought to life by an exhilarating curriculum which equips pupils exceptionally well for living in the 21st century. 'Super learning days' engage learners in a most innovative and exciting way. They examine the past, and present to prepare them well for their future as global citizens. 'Emergency Aid' weeks ensures that by Year 6 pupils know how to dial 999, put someone in the recovery position after a heart attack or stem severe bleeding. 'Flash bang wallop' days engage pupils in scientific experiments, and 'Victorian days' involve the whole family as parents and carers prepare jam sandwiches wrapped in greaseproof paper and dress their children in Victorian costumes.

Links with other countries develop in pupils a feeling of belonging to the whole world community. The school is very aware of the importance of pupils knowing about the diversity of British culture and are developing further ways to prepare for life in a culturally diverse society.

This is a school where the headteacher's outstanding leadership and management are pivotal to the school's success in raising the achievement and attainment of its pupils to very high levels. Leadership is highly successful in combating a wide variety of barriers to learning. It galvanises all concerned with the school to tap into a wide range of valuable initiatives to improve the education of the pupils. Staff throughout the school are vociferous in their support of the leadership's exceptional qualities.

The headteacher is exceptionally well supported by an excellent leadership team. They share her passionate commitment to providing pupils with a rich and exciting environment which promotes highly motivated learners.

Parents put great emphasis on the way the school helps them to be involved in their children's education. A significant number of parents have been so well supported that some are now holders of recognised qualifications. These include university degrees and those concerns are teaching French in the school, supporting pupils with complex needs as well helping their own children to be successful learners.

Staff, parents, governors and representatives of the local community have a tangible pride and enthusiasm for their school and their aspirations for the school know no bounds. Once one ambition has been reached another one is waiting to be tackled. Barriers to learning are not accepted as reasons or excuses for failure or even second best and as a result this school is up there amongst the very best in England.

The school judges its overall effectiveness as good with outstanding features. They are too modest and the parents and pupils know better. They think their school is

excellent and indeed they are absolutely correct. This is an outstanding school and is a shining example of what should be on offer for all children.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Discussions with parents and their written responses indicate how proud they are of their children's excellent achievements. Children join the school with skills with levels of attainment much lower than those expected. They make rapid progress in the nursery and reception classes and by the time they move into Year 1 the majority are reaching the early learning goals. This excellent start is continued in Key Stage 1 and 2 by the time they are seven and eleven pupils are consistently attaining standards significantly above average. All pupils, no matter what their backgrounds or abilities, work exceptionally hard and achieve the highest standards they can.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The children at St Patrick's have a warmth, humour and thirst for knowledge which is exemplary. Their parents are amazed at the speed they settle into the nursery and quickly learn so many new things. This eagerness for learning continues throughout the school and by the time they move to the secondary school pupils show a gritted determination to do well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

'Teachers have been in touch with his strengths and built on them'. This is one parent's view of the quality of teaching and it is absolutely right. Staff rigorously assess pupils' work and use it meticulously to plan for future learning. As a result progress is rapid and pupils are motivated to constantly improve to reach the next level. Teaching assistants are exceptionally well trained and are used very effectively to provide high quality additional support to pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The well-planned curriculum is underpinned by the school's Christian faith and values. It continually challenges the pupils and inspires them to learn. Eco-warriors, justice and peace members, librarians, playground buddies and school forum representatives provide pupils with excellent opportunities to make a difference in their school. These experiences provide them with the tools needed to be in charge of their own future and to be successful and happy adults

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils' success in their personal and academic development is because of the excellent care the school provides for them. Vulnerable pupils receive a particularly high level of care and support and as a result become confident and successful learners. The 'learning train' for younger pupils and individual targets for the older ones ensures that all pupils know exactly how to improve and move onto the next levels.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The inspirational headteacher, her excellent senior management team and skilled and challenging governing body lead and manage the school with an outstanding vision and flair resulting in excellence in all aspects of its work. The unanimous praise from the parents can be summed up by comments in one of the questionnaires. 'Our school is one we are extremely proud of!! We wouldn't change one thing about it. Well-done St Pat's'. The inspection echoes those remarks. This school provides excellent value for money.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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04 May 2006

Dear Children

Thank you so much for being so friendly and welcoming when I visited your school a short while ago. The reception committee that greeted me and took me to see all the best things about your school made feel so welcome.

You are very successful and enthusiastic learners who work really hard to do the very best you can. I wonder if you know that your work in English, mathematics and science is among the very best in the whole of England. How brilliant is that? No wonder you are so proud of your school.

I was very pleased to hear Year 6 pupils say that they were not afraid of their SAT tests. You are so sensible to see them as a chance to show your parents and teachers just how clever you are and how much you have learned since coming to St Patrick's.

It was so good to hear from you that there is no bullying or swearing in your school, and you also said that if there was, your teachers would quickly sort it out. This obviously makes you feel very safe in school.

I could see you enjoy taking responsibilities for your school. The idea of having 'eco warriors' who go round turning off lights that are not needed is such a good idea. You all know such a lot of fascinating things. I am so pleased your teachers are helping you learn about different places such as China and India. You realise how important it is to understand how different people in other countries and in Britain live.

When we were talking, one of you said your school was 'fandabbydozey'. You are absolutely right! I think you are very lucky to go to such an excellent school where your headteacher and teachers work so hard to make lessons fun and help you learn such a lot. I hope you will continue to enjoy school as much as you do now and that it will help you to become happy and successful adults.

Best Wishes
Carole Cressey
Lead Inspector