



St Pius X Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112365
LEA Cumbria
Inspection number 278916
Inspection dates 14 September 2005 to 15 September 2005
Reporting inspector Jennie Platt

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Schneider Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Barrow-in-Furness
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Cumbria, LA14 4AA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01229 894651
Number on roll	215	Fax number	01229 894652
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Chris Salmon
Date of previous inspection	1 January 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Patricia Tumelty

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

St Pius X Roman Catholic Primary School is an average size school situated in an area which includes pockets of social and economic deprivation with high unemployment. The school is part of the Barrow Excellence Cluster Partnership and benefits from additional support to help pupils overcome emotional barriers to their learning. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is high. A very small number of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a similarly low number need support because English is not their first spoken language. The proportion of pupils with additional learning needs is broadly average. Pupils start school with overall attainment lower than that usually seen. Sport plays an important part in school life and the school has won several prestigious awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school correctly judges itself to be a good school. Teaching is good and pupils achieve well. Attainment is below average but good teaching and effective learning ensure the pupils make good progress from the reception class onwards. By the time they leave the school, pupils achieve standards which are generally above average. Owing to the quality of care, the outstanding extra-curricular opportunities available and the exciting teaching they receive, the pupils enjoy school, behave well, remain safe and healthy and grow into mature, helpful and reflective young people. The headteacher and deputy give strong leadership. Governors are very supportive although not yet sufficiently involved in making or challenging decisions. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. However, there are a few remaining weaknesses. Although meticulous analysis of pupils' test results is providing the school with clear overall targets, assessment details are not used consistently to set targets for individual pupils. Handwriting continues to need attention. Although many pupils demonstrate above average skills in information and communication technology (ICT), their progress is sometimes hampered by the lack of computers. After an unsettling time of staff changes the school has a stable staff, with a new headteacher and deputy, and is well placed to move forward. Value for money is good.

not applicable

What the school should do to improve further

Focus on:

- raise standards in writing by improving the quality of the pupils' handwriting
- further improving the pupils' progress in ICT by increasing the number of computers available;
- involving pupils more in their learning by extending the use of individual targets;
- extending the role of governors.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school that standards are high and pupils achieve well during their time in the school. From a low starting point, pupils in the reception year achieve well in their first year. The pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1 and by the age of seven, they attain standards similar to those in most schools. Good teaching continues and sustains good progress throughout the school. As a result, standards as pupils leave school are above the national average. Pupils enjoy using their numeracy skills and standards in mathematics are especially good. Reading is the strength in English. Although writing is satisfactory few pupils have a neat style of handwriting because the school lacks the clear guidelines needed to teach this skill satisfactorily. Moreover, pupils in Key Stage 1 do little imaginative writing. Information and communication technology is taught well and pupils were observed working at

levels higher than expected for their age. More computers would enable all pupils to work in the suite at the same time. The trend in national test results in Key Stage 2 has been above the national picture and the school often exceeds its challenging targets. Pupils with additional learning needs, and those learning through English as an additional language have their needs assessed promptly and the extra help provided enables them to achieve particularly well.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher and deputy headteacher implement initiatives which have a positive effect on standards. For example, the analysis of assessment data is very thorough and helps teachers to plan more effectively to meet the needs of the learners. Additional analyses have also highlighted the need to improve handwriting. The school is self critical in all aspects of its life and has an accurate picture of strengths and areas for development. Parents and pupils' views are sought and acted upon and the school has a very good reputation locally. Subject leaders have a clear picture of what needs to be done and plans are established to create more monitoring time. The resulting action plans are well set out, with the best example being for mathematics which includes crystal-clear advice and specific criteria to measure success.

The governing body is supportive of the school and ensures that it meets statutory requirements. It has set up links with classes to increase their first hand knowledge of school life. Currently, governors are not fully involved in decision making and are not adept at challenging the school about its priorities. This is evident in the large surplus of money which is retained, despite the shortage in computers which restricts pupils' opportunities in lessons. The school has now earmarked most of the surplus for additional building.

The school has had an unsettled two years but now key staff posts are in place, it is steaming ahead with a good capacity to improve.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Visitors to the school are warmly welcomed. Parents are very pleased with the education their children receive and ensure that the children attend regularly and arrive punctually. Pupils enjoy lessons especially when a game is included, such as the session of "bingo" that enlivened a lesson. Staff have high expectations of behaviour and as a result pupils learn in an orderly community. Pupils try hard and respond well, as was seen in their enthusiasm to learn French.

Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are happy in school and they feel secure. As well as celebrating their own faith, pupils respect the traditions of other world religions. The pupils care for those less fortunate than themselves by raising considerable funds for charities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good and pupils make effective progress as a result. Staff are enthusiastic, keen to do their best for pupils and work well to extend pupils' skills. Consequently, pupils show a pleasing interest in their work and make the most of learning opportunities. In most lessons, the teachers use a variety of methods in order to capture the pupils' interest and help them to learn; this strategy is particularly effective in numeracy lessons. In English, however, the use of assessment to help pupils improve is not effective. Teachers and support staff work together well to help pupils with learning difficulties and those learning through English as an additional language to achieve realistic targets. Staff make effective use of the computers available to help all these pupils play a full part in lessons. Higher attaining pupils are challenged well and, where teaching is outstanding, in ICT in Year 5, for example, standards are especially high. Occasionally the pace of learning slows when teachers follow too closely guidance in commercial schemes. For example, after a lively opening in some lessons, the pace of learning slumped as the task was not sufficiently challenging to sustain initial enthusiasm. A lack of consistency in the teaching of handwriting means that standards vary through the school.

Grade: 2

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A lively and interesting range of experiences enables pupils to learn with enthusiasm and progress well both in their learning and their personal development from the earliest stages in the school. Effective use is made of staff's personal expertise to add interest to the curriculum. This has led to pupils in Years 3 to 6 starting to learn French. Good links with the local secondary school, as in French or science, benefit learning. However, the limited number of computers available for ICT reduces pupils' opportunities to practise in lessons and use ICT in other subjects.

Lessons are supplemented by an exceptionally good range of activities, including sport, music and art. Sport is a very strong feature in the school and success is evident in the many trophies and photographs proudly on display. Some pupils compete at county and national level in events, such as orienteering, and this includes staying away from home. The independence this promotes has a positive impact on pupils' confidence and self-esteem.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school cares diligently for the health and safety of pupils. Strategies to check risks are securely in place. Pupils are confident that help is available when needed. If they

have a concern they can use the worry box, knowing staff will respond. Effective Child Protection procedures are well known by staff. As well as making effective use of its own resources, the school benefits from good relationships with parents and effective links with outside agencies who visit to speak to pupils as well as offer advice. The school has very good links with the Barrow Excellence Cluster initiative which funds support staff who are trained to help the most vulnerable pupils. They make themselves available for a friendly chat as well as organise group sessions to provide more individual support. The school promotes the health and well-being of pupils effectively and has been awarded Healthy Schools Award and Active Mark Gold.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

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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?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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

St Pius X Catholic Primary School

Schneider Road

Barrow-in-Furness

Cumbria

LA14 4AA

16th September 2005

Dear Pupils

Thank you so much for your help when we inspected your school. You made us feel most welcome by having time to chat, even on a rainy day.

We agree that your school is a happy place to be and that you are correct in the opinion that it is a good school. The things we particularly liked were:

The good teaching helps you to learn well and make good progress.

You work hard and enjoy school.

Staff ensure you feel safe and you know you can always get help.

Your school is well managed especially by your headteacher and deputy.

You have an amazing range of clubs and must be very proud of your sporting achievements.

We have asked your teachers to improve a few things to make your school even better. These things are:

To teach you how to write imaginatively and neatly by the time you leave school.

We would like to see more computers so that you can all use them in your information and communication technology lessons.

In English, older pupils have been set individual targets so they know how to improve their work. We would like to see targets set to help you in other subjects.

We would like the school governors to help your teachers when making decisions and to check that they are doing the right things to improve your school.

We would like to say that your friendliness cheers the school up and made our stay most enjoyable. May we offer you all the very best in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs J Platt and Mrs P Parrish (The inspection team)