

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102331
Local Authority	Havering
Inspection number	286342
Inspection date	14 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Nick Butt

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 on roll	
School	305
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr M O'Regan
Headteacher	Mrs M J Vincent
Date of previous school inspection	8 July 2002
School address	Lowshoe Lane Collier Row Romford RM5 2AP
Telephone number	01708 745655
Fax number	01708 731696

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues -achievement and standards, personal development and well-being, teaching and learning, the curriculum, care, guidance and support and leadership and management - gathering evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and documents. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils, governors and staff, also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This popular, larger-than-average, school draws pupils from a wide area. The proportion of pupils whose families claim free school meals is low. Just over one fifth of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest group being Black African. Few pupils speak English as an additional language. A small number of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities. The school has awards for promoting basic skills and healthy lifestyles and for developing its staff.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This good school has many outstanding features. Pupils thrive in a friendly and caring atmosphere, where the development of basic skills is given a high priority. As a consequence, pupils reach standards that are consistently above average and achieve well from starting points that are a little below average. Initiatives to improve writing for higher attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2, and to improve mathematics by the end of Year 6, have been successful, reflected in improved scores in the 2007 national tests. Learning is fun, and an excellent curriculum ensures pupils enjoy a full range of exciting and challenging experiences, both within and outside the school day. The provision of information and communication technology (ICT) is a particular strength, with standards that are well above average, and strong links to other subjects.

The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. Ably supported by the deputy head and other senior leaders, she has built an effective and dedicated team, wholly committed to the welfare and academic success of the pupils. Parents wholeheartedly support the work of the school. One commented, 'The school is like a second family that is there in times of need, not only for the children but for the whole family.' Pupils are cared for exceptionally well and feel safe and secure in school, giving them the confidence to try their best and not give up when work is challenging. Their personal development and well-being are outstanding. They treat one another with consideration and respect, and are keen to participate fully in all the school offers them. Behaviour is impeccable. Pupils follow the strong spiritual and moral lead given by adults in a school underpinned by Christian values, and this is reflected in their outstanding social and cultural development. They value their differences and celebrate one another's traditions.

Teaching and learning are good with outstanding features, ensuring that all pupils achieve well whatever their starting points. Classrooms are attractive learning environments, with stimulating displays of high quality pupils' work, especially in art. Teachers use interactive whiteboards particularly well to interest and engage pupils, and to involve them fully in lessons. In one outstanding lesson, pupils watched a presentation of different styles of newspaper article and a news video clip to help them understand different approaches to journalistic writing. This inspired them to produce work of a very high standard. Pupils like the variety of approaches teachers adopt and the 'fun ways' they show them to go about their work. Occasionally, pupils are not given the opportunity to be as actively involved in the lesson as they could be.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to live healthy and safe lives. One said, 'I run up and down the stairs - it warms me up and gives me exercise!' They know all about how to combat bullying from their recent anti-bullying week, and feel it is not a problem for them. Those who spoke with inspector say they would turn to an adult if they had a worry. Pupils make a considerable contribution to school life through offering their views as school councillors, and more informally at the headteacher's tea parties. They raise money for local and global charities, and have very strong links with the church and parish. The choir has recently sung at the Millennium Dome and pupils also entertain the elderly with Christmas carols. Pupils develop a good basic skills and leave the school well-prepared for secondary school.

The impact of leadership and management upon the quality of the school's provision is good, with a careful schedule for self-evaluation throughout the year that involves leaders and subject managers. The evidence collected provides a secure basis for an accurate assessment of the school's strengths and needs, which translates into effective strategic planning for future

development. Sometimes teachers are not given enough guidance about how they could improve a lesson that has been observed, but in general the feedback is helpful and incisive. Pupils' progress is tracked closely, and any at risk of falling behind is identified and supported promptly. Governors support the school well, and play a key strategic role in reviewing its performance.

The care, guidance and support given to pupils are good. Marking is effective and shows pupils how they can improve. Pupils also know what they need to do to raise their achievement in literacy and numeracy through individual discussions with their teachers and through jointly setting targets, or 'TBI's (To Be Improved) as they call them. Good classroom support is given by teaching assistants to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but often the targets written into their individual education plans are too general. This makes it difficult to measure how much progress they have made between reviews. Pastoral care is outstanding, with all safeguarding procedures and risk assessments in place, and pupils are known especially well as individuals. A parent noted, 'Our son feels a valued member of the school community.'

Pupils' great enjoyment of school is boosted by the wealth of extra-curricular activities on offer to them, which also contributes significantly to their outstanding personal development. Clubs include gymnastics, Spanish and tennis, as well as a breakfast club and an after-school club. They go on plenty of trips, including a residential visit to Wales for the older pupils, and also benefit from visitors such as artists and musicians and Salsa dancers. The fully integrated curriculum caters extremely well for the three mixed-age classes.

The school has improved greatly since its last inspection, and the school day now meets the recommended length. Teaching is better, with work more suited to pupils' needs, and progress is tracked very carefully. Above average standards have been maintained over several years, and the school is well-placed to continue to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage is led and managed well, with an increasing focus on learning by play and child-initiated activities. Children enjoy the new phonics scheme, and are learning their sounds quickly. They enter the Reception classes with abilities a little below those normally expected, but make good progress, so that most of them are reaching the early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1. Planning and assessment are detailed and give children a variety of rich experiences in all six areas of learning. The area outside the Reception classes lacks shelter for inclement weather, and is not fully secure. Parts of it become slippery in the wet and have had to be cordoned off.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure targets on the individual education plans of pupils with learning difficulties state exactly what they need to know and understand to improve.
- Develop the Foundation Stage outdoor area to make it a safe and secure learning environment for young children.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

21 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Romford, RM5 2AP

Thank you very much for making me so welcome at your school. I did enjoy my visit, and agree with you that you go to a good school. There are many things that are special about it and here are some of them.

- You care for each other extremely well, and the older pupils help the younger ones.
- You make good progress in your work and reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science.
- You know all about living healthily and staying safe, especially how to eat a healthy diet.
- The school council has a real say in how the school is run.
- Attendance is good and you love coming to school.
- The teaching is good, and there are many activities for you to enjoy.
- The school cares for you especially well, if you have a problem or need help.
- The school is run well by the headteacher and her staff, who work very hard to make sure you have the best possible education.

The children in the Reception classes settle quickly and get off to a good start. The outdoor play area for them is not very safe or secure at the moment, so needs to be improved. Those of you who find work more of a struggle are supported well in class. I have asked your teachers to make sure they make a note of exactly what you need to do to succeed in your learning.

Thank you once again for your help. My best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mr N Butt,

Lead inspector