

St Patrick's RC Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105726
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	287315
Inspection dates	2–3 July 2007
Reporting inspector	David Blackburne

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Fr P Sumner
Headteacher	Mr B McKeown
Date of previous school inspection	10 December 2002
School address	Lee Street Oldham Lancashire OL8 1EF
Telephone number	0161 6330527
Fax number	0161 6283199

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Patrick's is an average sized school in an urban area which has high levels of social disadvantage. Almost a quarter of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above average. The school is the most ethnically diverse primary school in Oldham, with 11 different mother tongues spoken by learners. Over one-third of learners are from minority ethnic groups, which is much higher than average. A quarter of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Patrick's is a good and improving school in which pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding.

Achievement is good. From starting school with skills that are below national expectations, children make good progress in the Foundation Stage due to the good teaching and many opportunities to learn offered to them in a caring and supportive environment. Children learn from the outset to care for others. This develops into the obvious respect that pupils have for their peers and adults. Pupils continue to make good progress throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 to achieve standards which are broadly in line with national averages by the time they leave Year 6. This is due to the good teaching they receive and the good quality curriculum they experience. The standards that pupils attain in basic skills combined with their excellent personal development prepare them well for the future. The increasing number of pupils learning English as an additional language are welcomed into school and thrive. They respond well to the challenge of learning English and make good progress because of the good quality support and good teaching they receive.

A very positive atmosphere is created by pupils behaving outstandingly well and being aware of the feelings of others. This leads to them feeling safe in school and thoroughly enjoying their education. Through the highly vocal and visible school council, pupils raise money for local charities, showing their very good understanding of how they are part of communities both inside and outside school. The multicultural nature of the school and the racial harmony enjoyed by all pupils are strong features brought about by the particularly caring and inclusive ethos created by the headteacher. One school display captured perfectly the feel of the school when it stated: 'Like the colours of the rainbow, every culture is rich and beautiful.' Pupils are guided well to improve their work by the comments made by their teachers in some subjects, but this is not consistent in all subjects.

Leaders at all levels in the school contribute well to pupils' outstanding personal development but the contribution of subject leaders is not as well developed in its impact on improving standards. The school has an accurate view of its performance. It has addressed successfully all the issues raised by the last inspection. The improvement in attendance from below average to above average is the result of many initiatives and incentives put in place by the leadership of the school. The good quality of its leadership, including that of the governing body, and its successful track record of improvement, mean that it has good capacity to improve further. The school gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency and quality of academic guidance to assist pupils in knowing what to do next in order to improve.
- Develop the role of middle leaders in order to raise standards further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter Nursery with below average skills for their age, make good progress across the school and reach broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave in Year 6. Teachers and teaching assistants in the Foundation Stage encourage pupils

to work and play cooperatively and, as a result, they achieve well in their personal, social and emotional development. This prepares them well for the activities ahead in Key Stage 1. Good progress is maintained in Years 1 and 2 and, since the last inspection, standards overall have risen at a faster rate than seen nationally. Attainment at the higher National Curriculum Level 3 in both writing and mathematics was particularly impressive in 2006. Pupils have met their challenging targets in Key Stage 2 for the past two years and the timely introduction of well considered strategies for improvement in science have led to much higher standards in this subject. Pupils with English as an additional language and also those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as their peers because of the comprehensive support they receive from their teachers and teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

A Year 6 pupil spoke for many when she said: 'Our school is full of pupils from many different cultures and we all get on so well together.' Indeed, pupils are proud of themselves, their classmates and the adults who work with them, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They have a strong sense of right and wrong, are respectful and caring to each other and behave impeccably in lessons and around school. They feel safe, say that bullying is rare and that their teachers and teaching assistants are always there for them to help solve any problems they may have. The school council has a high reputation among all pupils and has introduced 'ideas boxes' into each classroom to encourage other pupils to come forward with suggestions as to how the school can be made even better. The fruit tuck shop, non-uniform day for charity and the letters sent home about healthy eating are just three examples of the impressive work school council members do. The house system ensures that pupils of different ages meet regularly together and the junior sports leaders, who help Nursery pupils with their games, are indicative of the quite remarkable effect older pupils have on the well-being of younger ones. Good achievement in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and the many opportunities pupils have to refine their computer skills prepare them well for their secondary school careers and for their life after formal education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Children in the Foundation Stage are helped to settle quickly and encouraged to become independent learners. Staff work hard to create a fun and stimulating learning environment, and children feel safe and confident to learn and explore through a range of exciting activities. Consequently, they make good progress. Relationships are very good throughout the school, with pupils showing respect for each other and all adults. Behaviour of children is consistently impressive as a result of teachers' high expectations. Highly effective teaching assistants make a positive contribution by supporting individuals and groups and ensuring that they make good progress. Learning objectives are a feature of all lessons but these could be more specific in some lessons. The use of interactive whiteboards and computers in classrooms by pupils and teachers stimulates pupils' interest and makes learning more enjoyable. Activities are well planned to cater for the needs of all pupils, providing them with the challenge and support to make good progress. Pupils are given the opportunity to develop independent learning. Pupils work collaboratively in many lessons and actively support each other in their learning. However,

the pace of teaching is variable, being brisk in better lessons. When the pace of lessons drops pupils become less focused on learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum caters well for the needs of all pupils and fulfils statutory requirements. Good provision is made for English, mathematics and information and communication technology. Grouping the oldest pupils by ability for mathematics provides good challenge and support for these pupils. Pupils in Year 6 have the opportunity to attend master classes in mathematics at the high school to stretch the most able still further. There are some good examples of links between subjects being made to develop core skills and stimulate pupils' interest. However, this approach is not consistent in all subjects across the curriculum. Particular care is taken to ensure that the curriculum reflects the pupils' multicultural background. For example, a Year 2 lesson which involved the drawing of fruit included some more familiar to pupils of minority ethnic origin. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are provided for well by individual education plans and a variety of interventions designed to cater for their particular needs. The curriculum is strengthened by the use of a specialist teacher for singing and instrumental music lessons. Pupils are involved in a variety of visits and benefit from a number of visitors into school; this enriches the curriculum. A range of extra-curricular opportunities helps develop a variety of interests, many of which contribute to healthy lifestyles.

The curriculum for the youngest children is good, although access to outdoor provision by children in Reception is limited by the constraints of the building.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall. The utmost care and support for all members of the school community lies at the very heart of what St Patrick's stands for. Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and adults, are a major strength, and mutual respect abounds. Pupils themselves are delighted to support their classmates, and say: 'We like working together because we get so many opportunities to encourage each other in everything we do.' They feel secure and approach adults quite naturally if they have any worries. Hardworking, talented and committed support staff provide very effective support for vulnerable pupils, those finding the work difficult and those for whom English is a new language. They ensure that everyone can take full advantage of all aspects of school life. All staff have received relevant training in child protection, and procedures to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils are in place. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.

Pupils' academic progress is tracked carefully but the effective use data to raise standards and achievement is not consistent across the school. The quality of marking, for example, varies from detailed advice, fully understood by pupils, on how work may be improved, to little more than ticks and cursory comment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is deeply committed to the development of the school and all the pupils and staff in it. Both staff and pupils feel valued and valuable due to the caring ethos generated by

the headteacher and very effective deputy headteacher. Strategic leadership is good and sets a clear direction for the school. The leadership of middle leaders is at an early stage of development and is not yet having an impact upon raising standards further. The school has developed clear and productive links with the local high school and other schools in the networks it belongs to. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and are pleased with the care and education it provides for their children. Racial harmony is strongly promoted and results in a wide mix of pupils working and playing happily together. Governors are supportive of the school and ask challenging questions to help the school develop further. The school's capacity to improve is good because it examines its performance well and takes positive action to make things better.

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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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 behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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?	2
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	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of St Patrick's RC Primary School, Oldham, OL8 1EF.

I am writing on behalf of the inspectors to thank you for the special welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. Everyone was very polite and helpful in answering our questions to help us in our work.

We think St Patrick's is a good school and the way you are all developing as young people is excellent. The school is helping you to be the best you can be and you are all trying to do your best in every way. You all work hard and learn well and show a lot of care for each other. Your behaviour is excellent and you know that if anyone has a problem your teachers will help you to sort it out. We particularly liked how well you welcome new children into school. We noticed how well children from lots of different backgrounds, who speak so many different languages at home, work and play so well together in school. You make many good choices about the food you eat and many of you spend a lot of your time getting plenty of exercise.

We could tell that you like your headteacher and your teachers and that they help you to learn well. We feel that you really enjoy your lessons. In some subjects your teachers help you by telling you what you have done well and what you need to do next, when they mark your work. We feel that you would do even better if they helped you in this way in all your work. We have asked those teachers who lead subjects to look closely at the work you and your teachers do, to help you all get even better.

We were very impressed by the way you try to help others by collecting money for charity and entertaining the sick and housebound old people who live near your school. We also liked the way so many of you take responsibilities in school to help everyone.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection of your school. We hope you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers to make St Patrick's an even better school.