



St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106460
Local Authority Wigan
Inspection number 287519
Inspection dates 5–6 March 2007
Reporting inspector Mark Madeley

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Hardybutts
School category	Voluntary aided		Wigan
Age range of pupils	3–11		Greater Manchester WN1 3RZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01942 244361
Number on roll (school)	311	Fax number	01942 244363
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs B English
		Headteacher	Mrs Patricia Bigland
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large school draws its children mostly from the immediate locality. The children are mainly of White British heritage, though a growing number from overseas are joining the school. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals is higher than average. Although the percentage of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average, the proportion of children with a statement of special educational need is high. Children join the Nursery class in the term after their third birthday. They transfer to the Reception class in the September before their fifth birthday.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Parents are delighted with all that it offers their children. They feel, and the inspection confirms, that the headteacher and her staff go 'above and beyond what is expected to help', children achieve well and grow into well rounded young people. A great strength of the school is the way it helps children to understand the importance of 'trust' and 'respect'. Children respond to teachers' trust by behaving exceptionally well, with older children being excellent role models for younger ones, and so they all feel safe from any oppressive behaviour. They develop good habits of study and lifestyle which will serve them well now and in their future lives. For example, children really enjoy active playtimes and make very well informed food choices.

Outstanding leadership by the headteacher, capably supported by the good governing body, has improved the school since the last inspection. Management has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses because systems for checking these are good. As a result, governors and managers have a clear picture of provision. However, they underestimated the school's effectiveness and some other aspects of its work because they focused too much on the 'dip' in progress in 2006, to the exclusion of the very good progress children made in 2004 and 2005. Good leadership and management has addressed all the issues from the last inspection, improved the curriculum, particularly in information and communications technology, where the school has gained national awards, and effectively tackled weaknesses in teaching. Children's good progress has been maintained and the school gives good value for money. These factors indicate that the school has good capacity to improve further.

Attainment on entry to Nursery is below average. Good quality teaching in the Foundation Stage enables most children to reach the national expectations for their age by the end of the Reception class. Children achieve well through the school because teaching overall is good and challenges their thinking and develops their skills. However, progress is not as uniform as it could be. Whilst it is good or outstanding in most classes, in others it is satisfactory. Test results at the end of Key Stage 2 have been above average for two years but 'dipped' to average in 2006. Results and progress in mathematics were relative weaknesses and good management has acted promptly to put into place measures designed to improve children's progress in this subject. Overall, standards are average at the end of Key Stage 2.

Children enjoy lessons because they are interesting and tasks for all abilities are challenging. Effective questioning frequently enables children to recall prior knowledge and confidently explain their answers. Teachers keep children well informed about how to improve their work in English. Children also have a good understanding of their individual learning targets and work hard to achieve them.

The good curriculum helps children to make good progress in their learning and outstanding progress in their personal development. Part of the reason why children enjoy school so much is the great emphasis on 'doing things'. Work in the arts has a high profile; excellent art displays in all areas of the school demonstrate the extent of

children's skills. The school's good provision for sports has been recognised by the national ActiveMark Award.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve children's progress in mathematics through Key Stage 2.
- Raise the quality of teaching to that of the best so that children progress consistently well throughout the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children start school with weak language skills and few children know how to play sensibly in a group. Good quality practice in the Foundation Stage helps children blossom into independent learners with good speaking skills. Their progress through the Foundation Stage is very good in all six areas of learning. During Key Stage 1, children achieve well. In 2006, Key Stage 1 test scores in reading, writing and mathematics were average and effective teaching has maintained this standard for five years. Good checking of children's progress shows that the recent initiatives to improve children's writing are already bearing fruit.

Children reached average test scores in the 2006 Key Stage 2 examinations, which disappointed the school because results had been higher, and progress better, in the two previous years. Results in mathematics were a relative weakness, whilst science results were a success, especially at the higher grade (Level 5), which nearly half the children reached. Particularly challenging targets were almost achieved. The school quickly evaluated these results and has put in place measures to improve children's progress in mathematics and thus reverse the downward trend.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development and well-being are outstanding and better than the school's somewhat modest view.

'My child is really enthusiastic about attending school.'

'Our children miss school at the weekends!'

These two comments reflect the views of all the parents - their children really enjoy coming to school. This enjoyment promotes the good attendance by the vast majority of

children. The school is working effectively with the small minority of parents who find it

harder to get their child to school. Children say, 'we are like one big family', and this is

clearly seen in the outstanding way that they respect one another and the staff. They behave extremely responsibly in class and out at play. They look out for each other and

older children are keen to be play leaders and support the younger ones. They all know an adult they can confide in, should it be necessary. Their outstanding knowledge of healthy foods even extends to a discussion amongst five-year-olds of which is better for

you - carrots or broccoli! Active playtimes, when staff often join in with games like cricket

or skipping, extensive physical education lessons and plenty of after school sports clubs

give children ample opportunity to exercise. Children's spiritual, moral and social development is good. They have a satisfactory awareness of other cultures and beliefs.

They are well prepared for secondary school because they have made good progress in

their basics skills and have a very responsible attitude to learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching helps children make good progress over their time at school. Occasionally, in the mixed Year 5 and 6 classes and in the Foundation Stage, teaching is outstanding. In most classes, children respond really well to teachers' interesting introductions and lively mental arithmetic sessions. They answer questions confidently and are very capable of explaining their answer, like the difference between simile and metaphor or between acute and obtuse angles. By asking for explanations teachers are helping children think through what they know. Tasks are set which challenge all ability groups because teachers have a clear picture, from their assessments, of what children know and can do. Effective use is made of teaching assistants to create small teaching groups and thus give almost individual attention to children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, so that their needs can be met. The school has identified that sometimes teaching is less effective, because children's behaviour is not always managed well or lesson planning is not followed, and is working effectively to improve this.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum meets the needs of the children well because it teaches them skills as well as knowledge. Parents commented, 'The children seem to cover a wide

variety of subjects which keeps it interesting.' The school actively promotes creative subjects as a tool for developing self-esteem in all children. Displays around the school are a wonderland of colour and inspirational in content. Children take part in many sports, drama and musical activities, which gives all children, but especially the talented, a chance to excel. Good provision for literacy, especially writing, enables all groups of learners to make good progress, but progress in mathematics is relatively slower because there were too few problem-solving activities. Children use the computers confidently and skilfully, thus preparing them well for secondary school. Children enjoy the very good range of after-school clubs, including an exceptional choir, and the many educational visits.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Parents feel that their children are very well cared for and the inspection team agrees. Parents say that, 'teachers are really caring and loving people...' and this view comes through in all their responses. Procedures for safeguarding children are in place, with risk assessments being particularly thorough. Parents feel well informed about their child's progress from the annual reports and value the chance to make comments. Parents of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are kept adequately informed of the additional programmes for their child. Children have an excellent understanding of how to improve their English work because teachers' marking is of such a high quality. It is less strong in mathematics, where children need more help. Parents feel that, 'It will be a sad day when they (the children) leave the safe and secure nest of St Patrick's.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Outstanding leadership by the headteacher allows staff and children to flourish. She demands the best for the children and works tirelessly with her staff to achieve it. Strong and effective teamwork by all staff enable children to fulfil their potential in a very caring and supportive environment. Good delegation of responsibilities allows teachers to exercise their managerial skills effectively. The pastoral and standards teams make use of data really well. They identify children who need further support or greater challenge and initiate actions that improve these children's learning. Subject management is good and has led to significant improvements in science, and information and communications technology. Management's view of the quality of teaching by individual teachers is accurate. Support and training are offered to all staff and this has led to improvements in children's progress, for example, in writing in Key Stage 1. The good governing body are very supportive of the school. They also hold the school's management to account, for instance, over the recent 'dip' in standards.

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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	2
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	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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.

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 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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We really enjoyed our visit to your school. You made us feel so welcome and you confidently shared your views with us, whether you were in the Nursery or in Year 6! We think that your school is good because it helps you make good progress in your learning. We agree with you that your headteacher leads your school very well, managing to bring out the best in everyone. She and her staff are working hard to make you safe and help you learn.

We were very impressed by you, too! You said again and again to us that you really like coming to school. You behaved exceptionally well in class and out on the yard. The knowledge that even the youngest children showed of healthy eating was outstanding. We also thought it exceptional that you reported feeling very safe in school. You have a clear understanding of your targets and how to achieve them and the teachers' marking of your English work helps you improve it. We thought that the school offered you a very good range of out of school clubs. One of us went to see your choir rehearse and was very impressed by your exceptional singing.

One of the things that make your school so good is that the headteacher and staff always want to improve things for you. We have asked them to do two things which will help make your school a better place in which to learn.

- Help children in Key Stage 2 make better progress in mathematics. You can help by continuing to work hard, in particular, at solving the problems you are given.
- Make sure that all teaching is of similar good quality so that your progress through the school is smoother.

Thank you very much for being so helpful to us during your school's inspection. You were all outstanding! We hope that you are all proud of what you, the staff, governors and parents have achieved and wish you and the school all the best for the future.