



St Patrick's RC Comprehensive School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111759
Local Authority Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number 289044
Inspection dates 31 January –1 February 2007
Reporting inspector Jean Kendall HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Baysdale Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Thornaby, Stockton-on-Tees TS17 9DE
Age range of pupils	11–16	Telephone number	01642 613327
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Fax number	01642 618227
Number on roll (school)	553	Chair	Mrs Patricia Ling
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Headteacher	Mr Kenneth Dyer
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2002		

Age group 11–16	Inspection dates 31 January –1 February 2007	Inspection number 289044
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Patrick's RC Comprehensive is a popular small school serving the communities of Thornaby and Ingleby Barwick. The school is in an area of above-average social and economic deprivation and the percentage of students eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school population is stable with few students joining after the start of Year 7 or leaving before taking their GCSEs. There are very few students from a minority ethnic group or whose first language is not English.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Patrick's School provides a satisfactory standard of education within a very caring and supportive environment underpinned by a strong Catholic ethos. The recently appointed headteacher and pastoral deputy headteacher provide clear direction focused on raising students' achievement and nurturing their personal development. Relationships between adults and students are supportive, engendering a high level of trust and building confidence in the students. Students enjoy coming to school. Their attendance is very good; they behave exceptionally well in lessons and have good attitudes to learning.

The senior team are leading developments in tracking students' progress and monitoring the quality of provision across the school. They have a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses, and self-evaluation accurately identifies areas that need to improve. Planning for improvement is beginning to make an impact with better results achieved in English and mathematics in 2006. However, students are not achieving as highly as they could in some subjects and the percentage attaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE is lower than it should be, based on the students' prior attainment.

Departmental heads are highly supportive of the senior leadership team and have a strong commitment to improving the quality of provision. They rightly recognise that there is more to do to improve departmental self-evaluation and the quality of teaching and learning across the school. The inspection confirms the school's view that teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Although a significant proportion is good, too much satisfactory teaching means that some students, particularly the more able, do not make the progress of which they are capable. The situation is improving with the introduction of more robust systems to ensure that students know how to improve the quality of their work, although this is not of a consistently high quality across the school.

The school gives satisfactory value for money. It demonstrates the capacity to improve because it has tackled issues identified in the last inspection, has a clear view of what needs to be done to improve achievement and actions have begun to make an impact in key areas of provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching from satisfactory to at least good so that all students learn effectively and make better progress.
- Ensure that students know how to improve the quality of their work in all subjects.
- Tackle underachievement at Key Stage 3 and raise standards at GCSE.
- Strengthen the arrangements for checking on performance, spreading good practice and widening the range of teaching and learning methods.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards and achievement are improving and are satisfactory. Typically, students enter the school in Year 7 having attained above average results in end of Key Stage 2 tests. They go on to achieve above average results by the end of Year 9, although some higher ability students do not always achieve their full potential. More robust processes to provide challenging targets and track students' progress are beginning to translate into results that are more appropriate to students' capabilities and starting points. In 2006, for example, the percentage of students achieving the higher Level 6 and above in the Key Stage 3 national tests increased to well above average.

GCSE results are improving in most subjects and the overall progress students make in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory, based on their prior attainment at Key Stage 3. In 2006, considerably more students gained five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics than in previous years. Students make good progress in mathematics, geography, and religious education. However, too few students achieve five or more A* to C grades at GCSE. There is underachievement in science and, despite improvements, some students still underachieve in English. The progress made by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities improved in 2006 and is satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Staff have worked hard to create positive and harmonious relationships and a safe environment for students. As a result, students enjoy coming to school and have very positive attitudes to learning. They behave exceptionally well in lessons, showing consideration and respect for each other and their teachers. Attendance is above the national average and there is a very low rate of exclusion.

Students feel safe and well cared for. Bullying is rare and students have a high level of confidence in their teachers to tackle issues and support them with any problems. The school has achieved a Healthy School's Award and students have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. The school's very good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development gives students a clear sense of right and wrong and they show maturity and sensitivity to the needs of others. Careers guidance and work-experience help the students to prepare for employment and the vast majority go on to further education and training. Students support their local community through, for example, Christmas visits by the choir to local old people's homes and providing Christmas hampers. They participate in a range of international charity work to support more disadvantaged communities. However, within school, they have limited opportunities to contribute their views, as the school council has not been as active this year. The vast majority of parents are extremely supportive of the school. Very good communication systems keep them regularly informed and updated about their children's progress in all areas of development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The inspection confirms the school's view that the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Although a significant proportion of teaching is good, there is too much inconsistency in practice which means that students do not make steady progress in all lessons. This is having an impact on standards in end-of-key stage tests and some students, particularly the more able, are not achieving as well as they could, given their starting points.

In good lessons, activities are well planned to match students' abilities, capture their interest and actively engage them in learning. The teaching is exciting and imaginative, providing opportunities for students to work collaboratively in pairs and groups. In these lessons, students respond productively to well paced, challenging tasks and they enjoy taking responsibility for their own learning.

In satisfactory lessons, learning is predominantly teacher-led and activities are less interesting and challenging. Students are too passive and are insufficiently involved in thinking and reflecting on their own learning.

The most effective teaching makes good use of the recently introduced processes to track students' progress, assess their need and plan relevant teaching approaches and learning activities. Work is marked constructively and students are given good opportunities to reflect on their understanding. They have a clear view of the standards they are at and what they have to do to improve further. The use of assessment to aid learning has much improved, but it is not yet sufficiently embedded to ensure consistency across all subjects and in all lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is broad and balanced, and meets statutory requirements. Deficiencies in the provision of information and communication technology (ICT) in Key Stage 4 have been resolved. Curriculum planning is responding to need; for example, this year, additional time has been allocated to science in Key Stage 3 to raise standards and achievement. However, the time allocated for physical education in Years 10 and 11 is less than that recommended, and the school relies on the full entitlement to be covered through extra-curricular activities. The curriculum is enriched by an extensive programme out-of-school hours, including a wide range of sporting activities. Outdoor pursuits, visits and residential experiences also play an important role in enriching students' experience. Students have a good range of opportunities for work-related learning and careers advice. The school has made a good start in developing 'Enterprise' activities and was successful in reaching the national finals of the 'Make Your Mark' initiative in 2006.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory. Pastoral care and support are strong and are underpinned by the school's Catholic ethos and Christian values. Teachers know the students well and show concern for their well-being. Students feel well cared for and supported and they know who to turn to if they need help or advice. There are thorough procedures for child protection and health and safety.

Academic guidance is improving but is of inconsistent quality across the school. The introduction of rigorous systems to track students' progress and attainment enables school leaders to identify students who are not progressing as well as they should. This is in early stages of implementation and is being used to support students who are at risk of underachieving. These support measures are beginning to raise achievement, although they are not yet translating into consistent practice in all lessons. Structures to support students with learning difficulties are planned through learning mentors and the learning support centre. These support measures are also beginning to raise standards and achievement. There are good links with local colleges and external agencies to support future academic and work-related learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The recently appointed headteacher is providing clear direction and drive to raise achievement and improve the quality of teaching and learning. Effective pastoral leadership supports teachers in nurturing students' personal development and in sustaining the constructive relationships that are evident throughout the school.

Senior leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas that need to improve, and they are tackling weaknesses effectively. They are leading developments in tracking students' progress and are taking action to address underachievement. This is beginning to make an impact, with improved results in English and mathematics. More rigorous approaches to monitor the quality of provision are being adopted, although systems are not fully embedded and performance management is underdeveloped. Actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning are being taken through focused professional development and the newly formed 'Teaching and Learning' group, which is leading the way in sharing good practice.

Departmental heads are supportive of the recently restructured senior leadership team and are strongly committed to improving provision and raising achievement. There is some good practice within departments but too many inconsistencies in approaches to monitoring the quality of provision and self-evaluation. As a consequence, good practice between and within departments is not shared as effectively as it could be.

Governors are hard-working and take an active role in the school's drive for improvement. They have a growing understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and this helps them to challenge the leadership of the school. Most of

the issues identified as needing improvement at the last inspection have been tackled with success. Resources are deployed efficiently and value for money is satisfactory.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

St Patrick's RC Comprehensive School

Baysdale Road

Thornaby

Stockton-on-Tees

TS17 9DE

31 January 2007

Dear Students

Thank you for welcoming us into St Patrick's. We enjoyed talking with you about your life and work in school. You told us how much you enjoy coming to school and taking part in all the activities it offers. We were impressed by your very good behaviour, your consideration for others and your desire to learn and do well. We know that you feel well cared for by your teachers. We found them to be supportive and very committed to helping you develop the personal skills you need to help you get on well in life. Your well-being is at the heart of what teachers do and your school is a safe and friendly place to be.

We found that, although most of you work hard, some of you do not always achieve as well as you could. Your teachers are also working hard to help you achieve more and make lessons more interesting. Although we saw much good teaching, we think teachers could make some of your lessons better by adding more variety to the sorts of activities you do and letting you be more involved in lessons. We think this will help you to take more responsibility for your own learning and help you do better in your GCSE exams. We have also asked them to give you more detailed feedback on some of your work so that you can be clear about what you need to do to improve it.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Jean Kendall, HMI