

Our Lady and St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112337
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	289251
Inspection date	22 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Stafford Evans

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	137
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Neil McNicholas
Headteacher	Mrs Jacqueline Hampson
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2002
School address	Ennerdale Road Ewanrigg Maryport Cumbria CA15 8HN
Telephone number	01900 812582
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This school is smaller than most primary schools nationally. It is located in an area that is socially and economically disadvantaged. A third of the pupils are entitled to a free school meal, twice the national average. An above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. All pupils are of White British heritage. There are very small numbers of looked after children. Attainment when children start school is well below that of most children of this age.

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 with excellent provision in the Foundation Stage, which ensures children make an outstanding start to their education. The school is continuously improving, with good improvement made since the last inspection. It has good capacity to improve further and provides good value for money.

Pupils achieve well and reach standards that are in line with the national average in English and mathematics, and above average in science. The overall average standards reflect the results of the 2006 national tests for 11 year olds except in English where standards are currently higher; they were below average in 2006, but pupils are now making faster progress compared with previous years. They now attain average standards in English. This is due to the introduction of much improved strategies to raise standards in writing. Despite this, pupils' range of vocabulary is limited and this hinders the achievement of even higher standards in pupils' writing skills. Standards in Years 1 and 2 are also improving significantly compared with previous years. The 2006 assessment results for pupils at the end of Year 2 were much higher than previously and current standards are above average. This has been brought about by well-judged senior leadership decisions that helped to improve the quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils make good progress in most lessons. However, progress slows when pupils enter Key Stage 2 because expectations of what they should learn are not high enough and the pace at which they work is too slow.

Teaching, learning and the curriculum in the Foundation Stage are excellent. There is a very strong emphasis on first hand learning experiences. This approach motivates children and develops a very high level of understanding of what they learn. Standards are mainly in line with national expectations by the time they enter Year 1. This means that the children have made outstanding progress from the low starting points when they start in the Nursery class.

Pupils make excellent progress in their personal development. This is because of the excellent level of care, support and guidance they receive from staff. Pupils behave very well and thoroughly enjoy coming to school. They feel safe and relaxed. The school provides a wide range of activities for pupils to learn about the importance of healthy lifestyles. This includes very good links with outside agencies. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of how to eat healthily and why it is necessary to take exercise. In practice, most are keen to exercise through sporting activities, but are less sure whether they are eating healthily often enough. Although below average, attendance is improving at a good rate. The school council provides pupils with a role in shaping the future of the school's community. They fulfil this role well and have a good level of involvement in the community outside school. They have the skills and personal qualities that prepare them well for the next stage of education and life in the workplace.

Teaching and learning are good. In most lessons, work is matched accurately to pupils' varying needs and pupils have a very good understanding of how to improve their work. This is because teachers' marking is high quality and pupils have an increasing ability to evaluate their own work in order to try and improve it. There are very good relationships between staff and pupils. These underpin good behaviour management and help create a good climate for learning

The curriculum is planned well to meet the needs of pupils, including good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a good balance between the academic and creative subjects with pupils having many opportunities to practise basic skills in different

subjects. There are planned opportunities to help pupils develop their speaking skills in order to develop the richness of their vocabulary but there is room to extend these opportunities to increase their effectiveness. The curriculum for pupils' personal, social and health education is good. The good range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport, provides good opportunities for pupils to take exercise and develop teamwork.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher, very ably supported by the senior management team, provides very good leadership and management of the school. The governance of the school is good. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and determines what the school needs to do to improve. This is confirmed by the inspection findings. The leadership team has brought about significant improvements in the last three years.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the rate at which pupils make progress when they start Key Stage 2.
- Improve the spoken language skills and vocabulary of pupils throughout Key Stage 2.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and pupils attain average standards by the end of Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

Children in the Foundation Stage make excellent progress and, from a low starting point, by the time they enter Year 1 most attain the nationally expected standard, with some exceeding it. Despite excellent progress, a very small number of children attain below the nationally expected level.

Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and standards are now overall above average by the end of the key stage. This is an improvement on the broadly average standards attained in 2006. There has been a significant improvement in writing standards, which are now average. Standards by the end of Key Stage 2 are average overall, with above average standards in science. These standards reflect the most recent national test results, except pupils are now making better progress in writing; as a consequence, writing standards are higher. Despite this, pupils' range of vocabulary is limited and this hinders the achievement of even higher standards in pupils' writing skills. Although progress in Key Stage 2 is good overall, pupils' progress is slower at the start of Key Stage 2 than elsewhere in the Key Stage.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils make excellent progress in their personal development and well-being, some from very low starting points. As a result, their personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils' behaviour is very good. Pupils really enjoy coming to school. They are enthusiastic learners. They speak about the many lessons they enjoy and one pupil summed up the mood when he said, 'It is a fantastic school'. They feel safe because they know that any incident of harassment is dealt with quickly and effectively by the staff. Pupils confirm that such incidents are very rare. They have a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and taking exercise. They say that they try to eat healthily most of the time and many take regular exercise.

Most pupils attend school regularly and are punctual for lessons. There is a small group of pupils who do not come to school often enough. This adversely affects the progress they make in lessons. Although below average, attendance is improving at a good rate.

Pupils have a good and growing understanding of their rights and responsibilities. They work cooperatively and collaboratively and have a good level of basic skills. Thus, they are well prepared for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good with outstanding lessons, particularly in the Foundation Stage. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is typically brisk, full of interesting activities based on first-hand learning experiences.

Throughout the school, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are taught well and learn new work at a good rate. They are usually well supported by skilled support staff.

Learning is generally interesting and pacy. Throughout the school, lesson planning is good because it shows clearly what pupils are expected to learn by the end of the lesson. This ensures that the teacher and the pupils are focused on what is important. The emphasis given to investigative and experimental work in science means that pupils are highly motivated; they learn and understand a lot during lessons.

Most pupils are attentive learners because the teachers provide interesting work. This makes them want to learn and they enjoy their lessons. The very good relationships between staff and pupils are the cornerstones of the behaviour management strategies. Skilled teaching assistants and other classroom helpers are well deployed to support learning.

Teachers have a wealth of information about the progress that pupils make. This information is used to match work to pupils' varying needs very well in most cases. Teachers' knowledge of pupils' learning helps to ensure that expectations of what they want pupils to learn are generally high. However, learning slows at the start of Key Stage 2 because expectations are not always high enough or the pace at which they learn is often not quick enough. Throughout the school, the quality of marking is good and helps pupils to improve their work. Pupils have a very good understanding of how well they are doing and identify ways of improving their own work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good in Key Stages 1 and 2, and outstanding in the Foundation Stage. The Foundation Stage curriculum is firmly rooted in making it very relevant to the needs of the children. Children are excited and excellent learners because of the curriculum and the expertly way it is taught. For example, each week's work is based on a much anticipated visit to somewhere that will capture the children's imagination and motivate them to learn.

In Key Stages 1 and 2, there is a good balance between academic and creative subjects. This helps to ensure that pupils enjoy their learning. Basic skills are developed well across the curriculum. However, despite recent improvements there is room for more planned opportunities in the curriculum to help pupils develop their speaking skills through enriching the vocabulary

that they use. More planning is needed to increase the opportunities for pupils to use subject specific language in subjects such as mathematics.

There is very good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education. This makes a significant contribution to pupils' good personal development. The extra curricular provision is good. It enhances pupils' learning. For example, they are learning to speak French. It also supports the school's drive to make pupils more active through a wide range of sporting activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Procedures and routines to ensure pupils' health and safety are thorough and risk assessments are fully in place. Child protection procedures are in place and very good links with outside agencies and families ensure that the needs of pupils, especially those who are vulnerable, are met. A skilled and well-briefed learning mentor and teaching assistants ensure that vulnerable pupils and others who need additional help are supported effectively and make good progress.

Considerable and successful efforts are made to improve attendance and a lot of effective work takes place with families. The school has very effective checking and recording systems to measure pupils' academic progress. Teachers are therefore in a position to provide excellent guidance on how most pupils can improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good with an outstanding vision of how to move the school forward. The headteacher has an excellent knowledge of how teaching and curriculum provision affect pupils' learning. She is clear about what to do in order to bring about improvement. This is the backbone of the school's continuous improvement over recent years. The senior management team work together very effectively. They have very good leadership and management skills. This has helped them to develop a good team spirit in school. In their drive for improvement, they are ably supported by staff and governors. As a result, standards have risen in the last three years and there are clear signs of further improvement. This is because the leaders have evaluated the school's standards and provision very effectively through effective monitoring systems. They then put effective strategies in place to improve the weaknesses. For example, the reasons for the below average standards in writing are being successfully tackled and there is a good awareness of the need to enrich pupils' vocabulary. Low standards in Key Stage 1 have been improved significantly because of much improved teaching and learning. Where weaknesses still exist in some lessons in Key Stage 2, the senior leadership team is using strategies to remedy the weaknesses with some success.

The school's self-evaluation is a very accurate appraisal of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The inspection confirms the accuracy of the school's judgements. The effective self-evaluation along with proven success in tackling issues from the last inspection and raising standards is the basis for their good capacity to improve. Another important factor is good governance. The governors have a good knowledge and understanding of the strengths of the school and areas for development. They are beginning to hold the school to account, whilst remaining supportive of the management team. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and

play an increasing part in helping their children learn; for example, through the well-structured and successful homework programme.

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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	1
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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?	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?	1

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	1
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

23 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Our Lady and St Patrick's, Catholic Primary, Maryport,

CA15 8HN

I enjoyed my visit to your school very much. Thank you for giving up your time to talk with me. You provided me with a lot of valuable information about your school. Through your school council, you play an important part in the life of the school. Well done.

You go to a very caring, good school. Most of you make good progress in your lessons. This means that the results of your tests are higher than they used to be and you attain standards that are in line with other schools. Children in the Foundation Stage do exceptionally well. Throughout the school, I saw lots of very good behaviour. You told me that you all feel safe and secure in school and there is always someone there to help you if you are worried about something. You take a lot of exercise and know about healthy eating.

Your school is well led and all the staff work hard so that you make at least satisfactory progress in your lessons. I have asked the teachers to make sure that this is the case for all of your lessons. Throughout the school, you have improved your standards in writing. To improve even further, the teachers are going to give you even more opportunities to help you improve your speaking skills.

You can help to make your school even better. Of course you need to work hard, but you also need to aim to do as well as you possibly can. You have a lot of talent. Come to school every day and set your sights high. For example, try to learn some new words and their meaning each day. Then, you will have more choice of words to say what you mean when you are speaking and writing.

Yours sincerely

Stafford Evans

Lead inspector