



St Patrick's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Consett

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114250
Local Authority Durham
Inspection number 289851
Inspection dates 23–24 January 2007
Reporting inspector Margaret Shepherd

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Stanley Street
School category	Voluntary aided		Consett, County Durham
Age range of pupils	3–11		DH8 6LN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01207 503982
Number on roll (school)	419	Fax number	01207 588918
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Clive Robson
		Headteacher	Mrs Pat Henson
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is twice the size of an average primary school and has a large catchment area that serves the town of Consett and pupils come from a wide range of different socio-economic backgrounds. Standards are broadly average when children enter the Nursery but with below average standards in communication, language and literacy. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs is average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The school has undergone several important changes since the previous inspection, which include a new headteacher and deputy headteacher, major building works and the establishment of a Foundation Stage unit.

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, which parents value. Pupils achieve well because they begin school with broadly average attainment for their age and standards are above average by the time they leave. Similarly, teaching and learning are good overall. The main strengths are in Key Stage 2, but there is also some good teaching emerging in the classes for younger pupils. However, the inconsistency in the teaching means that any good progress is not always built upon as well as it might in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. This is mainly due to a slower pace in some lessons and a less accurate match of the work set for pupils to match their varying abilities.

Children settle into the school well when they join the Foundation Stage. They make steady progress through this stage, and provision is satisfactory. This satisfactory progress continues through Key Stage 1 classes and pupils reach broadly average standards in Year 2. Progress is better in the Key Stage 2 classes and is good. The test results have been rising for some time and in 2006 were above average overall. The pupils make excellent progress in English in Key Stage 2 because of consistently good teaching and because the curriculum in English is particularly good with a clear focus on reading and writing. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress throughout the school owing to the sensitive and effective support of the teachers and teaching assistants.

The school places a strong emphasis on personal development and care; support and guidance are good. As a result, pupils make good progress in this aspect of their learning and become mature individuals who care for each other, enjoy their lessons and work hard. Their spiritual, social and cultural development is also good. Pupils make good contributions to the community and older pupils take their responsibilities seriously; for example, their work on the school council. Attendance varies between different year groups and, although it is improving, it is just below average. Pupils' moral development is excellent, with a particularly strong feature being the provision for extending pupils' mediating skills. Pupils develop a good level of basic skills and enjoy taking initiative, which prepares them well for their future lives. They have a good understanding of safe and healthy living.

The school provides a good curriculum with interesting opportunities to extend learning through visitors and links with other countries. The school's links with other countries extends pupils' understanding of the international community well. The reorganisation of the curriculum in mathematics is having a positive impact on achievement.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work well together to improve the work of the school. Key initiatives that they have put in place are resulting in rising standards, particularly in English in Key Stage 2. The governors play a key role in taking the work of the school forward and the new buildings have improved the quality of the school's provision. The new building work has caused some disruption to the schools' work and this hampered some of the school's ambitious plans for improvement. However, the new leadership team is now back to accelerating progress, supported by staff who are keen to improve their work. The school's

self-evaluation of its effectiveness is accurate and this, coupled with the clear direction set by senior leaders, ensures that the school has a good capacity to improve and provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the pace of lessons in the classes for younger pupils and ensure that all of the pupils are sufficiently challenged.
- Improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' overall achievement is good. Children enter the school with average overall standards but below average standards in communication, language and literacy. By the time pupils leave the school, overall standards have risen to above average. However, pupils' progress varies between the different key stages.

Children make satisfactory progress through the Nursery and Reception and by the end of Reception standards are average in most areas of learning but below average in communication, language and literacy. They are above average in personal, social and emotional development. Children's good achievement in this area is due to the carefully planned organisation and curriculum in the Foundation Stage. The pupils' progress continues to be satisfactory in Years 1 and 2. By the end of Year 2, standards are broadly average, but much closer to the national average in mathematics than in reading and writing. This overall picture of satisfactory progress masks the occasions when pupils make good progress, but it is not always built upon from one lesson to the next.

The 2006 national tests show that pupils make good overall progress in Key Stage 2. The school sets challenging targets for Year 6 in English and mathematics and in 2006 managed to exceed them, especially in English. Here, the pupils made excellent progress and the test results were clearly above average in this subject. The results in mathematics and science were average. However, the school did well to have more pupils reach the expected Level 4 than was achieved nationally, but slightly fewer pupils achieved the higher Level 5. The outstanding progress in English is due to three main factors. Firstly, this subject was made the school's top priority for raising standards by the new headteacher and deputy headteacher. Secondly, the school has reorganised its teaching of literacy to ensure that there is a major weekly focus on reading and writing. Thirdly, the pupils analyse their own work to show themselves how to reach higher standards. The inspectors judge that this year's Year 6 pupils are making better progress in mathematics than those of the previous year. The school has changed the setting arrangement in this subject, which is now working well. Pupils make satisfactory progress in science but could make better progress if the investigative aspects of this subject received more emphasis.

There are no significant differences between boys' and girls' achievement. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well owing to the good support they

receive in lessons, and to the work of the teaching assistants to support their individual needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils make good progress in their personal skills, which help them to become mature, caring and considerate young people. They make a good start in the Foundation Stage unit and the children work and play happily together. This good picture continues throughout the school with pupils enjoying their work and increasingly taking on responsibilities, such as supervision of the reception area and welcoming visitors to the school at lunchtimes. The school council members work well together and make important decisions about improving the school. Pupils raise considerable sums of money for charities. All of these features result in a good contribution by the pupils to their community. Pupils' behaviour is good but attendance is just below average. The rates vary between year groups and are lower in the younger classes. Pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development is good and pupils extend their understanding of other cultures; for example, through interesting links with other countries. Pupils' moral development is excellent; older pupils are particularly proud of their roles as mediators, supporting other pupils to resolve disagreements. Pupils have a good understanding of safe and healthy living and they are well prepared for their future lives through the gaining of basic skills and in using their initiative.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall but vary between key stages. All teachers work well with their teaching assistants and this has a particularly good effect on the progress of the pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Throughout the school, the teaching staff manage behaviour very well and have very positive relationships with their pupils. This produces a calm and well ordered atmosphere, which is conducive to good learning. Teaching in the Key Stage 2 classes is consistently good. In these classes, the teachers set a lively pace to learning, they are enthusiastic, have high expectations of pupils and ensure that there is a clear focus on basic skills. They ensure that there are different levels of work in lessons to match individual pupils' needs. The teachers make good use of assessment in their lesson planning and are very effective in supporting pupils to assess their own learning. This is particularly good in English and contributes significantly to their excellent achievement. In Key Stage 1 classes and the Foundation Stage, there is some good teaching and learning but it is not as consistently good as in Key Stage 2. When teaching is satisfactory, the pace of lessons is slower and teachers do not use assessment as effectively to match work to different pupils' needs or support them as effectively to assess their own learning. However,

the careful organisation of the independent learning in the Foundation Stage unit contributes well to children's personal development.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum with interesting opportunities to extend pupils' learning, including visitors to school. The international elements of the curriculum work well, particularly French lessons and opportunities for pupils to take part in video-conferencing with a French school. The organisation of the literacy curriculum in the Key Stage 2 classes is outstandingly effective and makes a significant contribution to the pupils' achievement in this subject. Too many worksheets are used in the Key Stage 1 classes in several subjects and in science more generally throughout the school. Where this is the case, lessons are less relevant to pupils' needs and interests. The planning of the Foundation Stage curriculum provides a good balance between independent learning and direct teaching. The provision for personal, social and health education promotes pupils' personal development well; for example, teaching the mediators how to carry out their responsibilities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The provision for pupils' care, support and guidance of pupils is good. Good standards of personal development throughout the school reflect the effective personal guidance that pupils receive. Pupils also receive clear guidance to support their academic progress, which is particularly effective in English in Key Stage 2 classes. The senior leaders are setting up more efficient systems to monitor progress more closely as pupils move through the school. The school values the support of parents and has a strong partnership with them. The school's Friends Association plays a valuable role in extending this partnership. Safeguarding arrangements are in place. Good support and guidance from the teaching assistants have a positive impact on these pupils' progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher set clear priorities for the school, which have had a significantly positive impact on achievement, such as the achievement in English. They value the staff's suggestions and make use of them in their planning to improve provision. The senior leadership team have very recently been assigned new management responsibilities and some of the staff have not yet begun to assume their new duties. However, all staff understand their new roles well, particularly their part in the monitoring of the school's work, such as the quality of teaching and learning. Evaluation is good; informed by a clear focus on provision and the impact on pupils' learning. Governance is also good; governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and monitor the

work of the school well. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory because of the disruption caused by major building work. However, ambitious plans to raise standards, and the early successes they are bringing, clearly demonstrate that the pace of improvement is accelerating and the school has good capacity to improve.

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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	3
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	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?	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	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?	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	3
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

St Patrick's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Stanley Street

Consett

County Durham

DH8 6LN

25 January 2007

Dear Pupils

Thank you for being so welcoming to us when we came to your school. You were all so friendly and helpful in answering our questions.

We were really impressed with how hard you work. You are particularly good at making progress in English in the junior classes and you really understand how to improve your work in this subject. We thoroughly enjoyed talking to your school council. They told us all about the work you do as mediators, which helps other pupils to understand each other's points of view. You have a good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy and you contribute well to your community, particularly the fund raising that you do. We thought that you had an excellent understanding of right and wrong. Your teachers work well with your teaching assistants to help you to learn better. We agreed with you that you have a lot of interesting visitors who come into school. Your headteacher and your deputy headteacher work well together and your governors are very keen to improve your school for you.

You try hard to learn and play well together. We think that in some lessons you could learn more quickly and do different things when you move into your groups. In some classes, some of you are absent from school too often.

We really enjoyed our visit to your school and we hope that you all do your best in future to make it an even better place to learn.

Yours sincerely

Maggi Shepherd

Additional Inspector