St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number	119583
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	291469
Inspection dates	30 November –1 December 2006
Reporting inspector	Dave Byrne

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

Type of school	Primary	**School address**	Littledale Avenue
School category	Voluntary aided		Heysham, Morecambe
Age range of pupils	4–11		Lancashire, LA3 2ER
Gender of pupils	Mixed	**Telephone number**	01524 851766
Number on roll (school)	186	**Fax number**	01524 855091
Appropriate authority	The governing body	**Chair**	Mr John Alderson
		Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Kendall
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4–11	30 November –1 December 2006	291469

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is small school with more boys than girls, the majority of whom are from White British backgrounds. Pupil mobility is high, particularly in Key Stage 2. Around a tenth of pupils are Travellers of Irish heritage. The eligibility for free school meals is above average. The attainment of children starting school in Reception is below what is typical for children of this age. There is a broadly average number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The Artsmark and Basic Skills Award have been achieved by the school as well as gaining accreditation from Investors in People. In January 2006, the headteacher took up a new post. Since then, two senior staff have led the school and there have been many staff changes, most of which are temporary. A new headteacher takes up post in January 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school is satisfactory overall but is inadequate in a small number of areas. Before its next section 5 inspection, Ofsted inspectors may visit the school to monitor progress in remedying the weaknesses. The school would receive two to five days notice of such a visit.

Although parents are satisfied with the school, many have concerns about the effect of staff changes and instability on their children's education. The impact of these changes has been reduced by the clear and determined management provided by the current leadership team. There has, however, been an adverse effect on pupils' achievement. In 2005, standards in English, mathematics and science were below average at the end of both Years 2 and 6. Given the below average attainment when children start school, this represented satisfactory achievement. In 2006, the results in the national tests were disappointing, being below the targets set by the school. As a result of better management pupils' progress has picked up in recent months but standards are not yet high enough. In information and communication technology (ICT) standards have risen significantly since the last inspection and are in line with national expectations. Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory although by the end of Reception about half of children are still a little way behind the expectations for their age.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with some good features. Pupils of all backgrounds are included totally in lessons. While work usually matches pupils' needs, on too many occasions the needs of the most able are not fully met. In many lessons pupils have only limited opportunities to learn with reasonable independence. Attendance is well below average. This is mostly because of the long term absence of a minority of pupils for cultural reasons. As a result, these pupils miss vital elements of their education which contributes to them underachieving.

'I love school because of the good friends I make' typifies the views of most pupils. Their behaviour is usually good in lessons. Both pupils and parents say that antisocial behaviour does occur at times outdoors, but such events are dealt with satisfactorily. The Artsmark award is testament to the good range of art work pupils produce and their enthusiasm for creative subjects. Recent initiatives have increased the emphasis throughout the curriculum on the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT, resulting in improving standards. Value is also given to pupils' personal development and as a result, most have a good awareness of the choices needed to keep fit, healthy and safe. Pastoral care is good and procedures for keeping pupils safe and secure are in place.

The current leadership team provides a clear educational direction for the school. Major strides have been taken towards establishing an accurate system of school self-evaluation and effective use of assessment by staff and pupils. These strategies, coupled with valuable support from the local authority, are increasing progress. The temporary nature of many staff, however, means that the management, monitoring and evaluation of some aspects of the school are currently inadequate. Satisfactory

governance makes sure that the school meets statutory requirements, although governors do not maintain a close enough check on academic standards and achievement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards for all groups of pupils in English, mathematics and science.
- Ensure that all aspects of the school are effectively managed, monitored and evaluated.
- Improve teaching so that the needs of the most able are met and pupils are able to take more responsibility for their own learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of both Years 2 and 6 are below average. Given the low attainment on entry to school, achievement is satisfactory. The school recognises that achievement could be improved and is taking effective steps to do so, with a marked increase in progress in mathematics. Satisfactory progress occurs in the Foundation Stage with about half of the children reaching the levels expected for their age at the end of Reception. High levels of mobility into Key Stage 2, coupled with long periods of absence among some pupils, adversely affect national test results. In 2005, standards were below average at the end of both Years 2 and 6 but pupils' achievement compared to similar schools, was broadly satisfactory. In 2005/06, unavoidable staffing disruptions hindered pupils' progress, particularly in Year 6, and so much so that results in English and science dipped below the targets set. Better teaching this year has improved progress in both Years 2 and 6 and the school is confident that in 2007 it will reach its targets for all subjects. However, the achievement of more able pupils is currently not as good as it should be. The number of boys with learning and behavioural difficulties is much higher than the number of girls and is the main reason why girls perform better in tests. Pupils taking time off school for cultural reasons miss out on learning. As a result, their achievement tends to be below that of regular attendees.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are satisfactory. When pupils participate in sporting and creative activities their social and cultural development is good. Attendance is well below average. Largely this is because of the absence of some pupils because their family works away from the locality for extended periods each year. Too many pupils arrive late for school. During practical lessons, for example when exploring force in science, pupils show enthusiasm for learning and usually behave well. Most pupils play together safely and a have a clear idea of what is right and wrong. Any incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. In the dining hall and when playing outside some boys are too

boisterous. Pupils recognise why a healthy lifestyle including regular exercise and a balanced diet is important. New class members are welcomed and included in all activities. Pupils' views are valued and the recently revamped school council is having a positive influence on aspects of school life. Pupils know about their local customs and culture and have a growing understanding of other faiths and traditions. They have respect for others and are interested in the clubs and other activities provided for them.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. A strong team spirit and a shared determination to raise standards have been established among what is a very new and temporary teaching team. The contribution of teaching assistants gives good support to all pupils and particularly those with learning and behavioural difficulties. Despite some challenging behaviour by a few boys, lessons are generally well managed and orderly. Lessons are well prepared with due reference to pupils' prior abilities although the needs of the more able are not always met. Although teachers value pupils' ideas, there is tendency to be very directive of their actions. This reduces the opportunity for pupils to work independently and to use their own initiative in lessons. Recent improvements in assessment have improved the teachers' knowledge of pupils' progress and capabilities and also informed the pupils about how to improve. This is starting to raise standards particularly in mathematics and increasingly in English. Expectations for pupils' handwriting and presentation are not always high enough which reduces the quality of their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It meets all statutory requirements for pupils from the Foundation Stage to Year 6 with a strength in the provision for the creative arts. In order to raise standards in English, mathematics and science, the school has recently given more emphasis to the development of the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. This is one reason why standards are improving. The provision for less able pupils and those from traveller backgrounds is effective but for the more able, it is not planned well enough. The curriculum is enriched by the selective use of specialist teachers, extra-curricular clubs, educational visits and visitors. Regular contributions from a local artist have raised the profile of art and design, and regular teaching by a specialist teacher lifts standards in music. The daily ICT club has improved pupils' computer skills. Well planned provision for personal and social education gives pupils a sound understanding of how to live healthily and keep safe, although the curriculum provides insufficient opportunities for pupils to work independently.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils' care, guidance and support is satisfactory with good pastoral care. Foundation Stage children are assessed effectively on entry and helped to settle well into school routines. Adults are committed to promoting safe practices. Several healthy eating awards have been achieved. The school works well with parents and other agencies. Child protection procedures are in place and risk assessments are carried out rigorously. Assessment systems are now helping teachers to identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses so that action can be taken to raise academic standards. Across the school, pupils understand their shared targets for mathematics and English and increasingly know what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties are well cared and supported and fully included in all lessons. The support for the most able pupils however is often not effective enough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall but inadequate in some areas. Since taking over the management of the school, the acting headteacher and her deputy have taken swift action to improve academic standards. Sharp and incisive evaluations have been incorporated into a detailed and rigorously prepared school improvement plan which accurately identifies priorities for raising standards. The staff team, coupled with expertise provided by the local authority, are tackling the most important things to improve the school. As a result, progress in mathematics is rising sharply and is steadily increasing in English and science. However, this improvement is not yet fully reflected in national test results. The provision for pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties, the management of mathematics and ICT are all good. The temporary nature of many teachers, however, means that some subjects and aspects of the school are currently not managed, monitored or evaluated well enough. The governing body is supportive and ensures that all statutory requirements are met but it is not involved enough in monitoring the school's academic performance. Since the last inspection, the school has improved satisfactorily and given the current educational direction and commitment of the staff, it has similar capacity to improve in future.

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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**

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?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

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.

Annex A

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	4
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

4 December 2006

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

Littledale Avenue

Heysham

Morecambe

Lancashire

LA3 2ER

Dear Pupils

As you know we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking with you during lessons at play and over lunch. We agree with your views that while behaviour is usually good, there are instances when some pupils seem to like arguing and falling out. This is a shame, but we are happy that the school deals with this most of the time.

Most of you like learning and enjoy practical activities for example in art, music and science lessons. While most of you are learning at steady rate, we have asked the school to do more to improve standards in English, mathematics and science. You are very well cared for by teachers and other adults but we feel that the school should give you more chances to act on your own and make your own decisions in lessons.

It is impressive to see the way you have coped with the many changes in teachers in the last few months. The way you are getting used to setting targets for your work and then working out how far you have gone to achieve them is good. If you keep up with this, it will help you all to do even better in lessons. We do feel though, that there is room for improvement in your handwriting and quality of presentation of work.

The school is entering a new era with a new headteacher and more permanent staff. If you continue to support the school and work with all adults, you will not only improve the school but also the levels of enjoyment that you have in your time there.

We wish you lots of luck and hope that you all continue to be good friends and thoughtful people.

Yours sincerely

Dave Byrne and Heather Evans

(Your school inspectors)