

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132835
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	294041
Inspection dates	3–4 May 2007
Reporting inspector	John Heap

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	252
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Emmanuel Gribben
Headteacher	Mr William Gerard Close
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2003
School address	Todholes Road Cleator Moor Cumbria CA25 5DG
Telephone number	01946 855011
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This above average-sized primary school serves a mainly White British population that has very small proportions from other minority ethnic backgrounds. It serves a semi-rural area where there is some economic and social disadvantage, although the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The school has Active Mark status. Recent times have been difficult and unsettling due to the headteacher's long-term illness. As a result, the local authority has provided additional support to the school and appointed an executive headteacher for the equivalent of two days per week to support the acting headteacher. A new headteacher is to take up post in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The pupils' achievement is inadequate. Children enter the Foundation Stage, in Reception, with skills that are slightly below those normally expected for their age. They make inadequate progress by the end of Year 6, and school's national test results in 2006 were significantly below average. The results have been similarly low for the past three years and the pupils' slow rate of progress is reflected in the school being placed in the bottom 15 per cent of schools nationally. Standards and progress are best in English because of stronger attainment in reading. However, pupils should be doing much better in writing, mathematics and science.

Strengths in developing the pupils' good personal development, especially with regard to behaviour, and the provision of care have been maintained since the last inspection in 2003. As a result, pupils behave well and enjoy school. They have a good knowledge and understanding of how to lead a healthy and safe lifestyle. They make a sound contribution to the life of the school and the wider community. Nevertheless, since the previous inspection there has not been enough focus or impetus on promoting pupils' achievement and this has led to insufficient gains. As a result, and despite their good attitudes to learning, pupils are not sufficiently well prepared for their future education.

Leaders have not shown sufficient drive in developing effective approaches to teaching and learning since the last inspection. This is now beginning to be addressed as a result of collaboration between the school's management and the local authority. However, systems, procedures and policies for monitoring teaching are weak and lack rigour. Teaching is inadequate because there is inconsistent use of assessment to match tasks to the individual needs of pupils, and marking does not help pupils to improve. Consequently, the teaching lacks challenge; some pupils commented that they found much of their work too easy.

The curriculum is satisfactory and effective in promoting pupils' social and personal development. Enrichment of the curriculum is good. Parents are understandably highly appreciative of the effective way the school cares for their children, but a significant minority are rightly concerned about the quality of teaching and the progress their children make.

The school has a more positive view of its work than that found by inspectors. The planning for school improvement lacks rigour, self-evaluation is weak and there is an acceptance of low standards. As a result, the school's capacity to improve is unsatisfactory. Despite very recent and purposeful support from the local authority and the efforts of the acting headteacher and part-time executive headteacher, improvements in tracking pupils' achievements, setting targets for learning and marking are slow. As a result, there is not enough evidence to indicate that these initiatives, as yet, have had significant impact, particularly on the pupils' achievements. Consequently, the school is not providing value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, mathematics and science.
- Improve the quality of teaching, and in particular ensure assessment information is used to plan learning which challenges all pupils.

- Improve the quality of marking so pupils know how well they are doing and how to improve.
- Ensure leaders and managers effectively monitor all aspects of the school and particularly the quality of teaching and learning.
- Make planning for school improvement more rigorous, particularly in setting challenging learning targets for all classes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Children enter the Foundation Stage with skills that are slightly below that expected for their age. Progress in Key Stage 1 is too slow and, by the end of Year 2, overall standards are significantly below average, particularly so in writing. Pupils make inadequate progress in Key Stage 2 and in 2006 the overall standards were significantly below the national average. Pupils are not making enough progress in their learning because of: wide inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning; the late introduction of effective systems to track pupils' achievements and in marking work effectively; and low expectations of what pupils can achieve.

There is some evidence that Year 6 standards are slowly edging up, but over time progress has been poor and, since the last inspection, standards have declined.

Although girls do better than boys by Year 2, there are no significant differences by the end of Year 6. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make the same progress as other pupils. The pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress as they benefit from being in small teaching groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Moral and social development are particular strengths that foster good behaviour, happiness, confidence and support for each other. Consequently, pupils enjoy school and attendance is satisfactory. Pupils say they have enjoyed taking part in African drumming, which has been part of the continual development of their understanding of cultural diversity. As pupils progress through school, they acquire a good range of interpersonal skills and positive attitudes to school and learning; these are good foundations for secondary school. The school's supportive atmosphere promotes good relationships. Pupils say that teachers help them to feel safe and secure in school, including dealing immediately with very rare occurrences of oppressive behaviour. Care is shown for the environment and pupils are keen to support the school's recycling of paper, bottle and cans. Pupils know the importance of healthy eating and exercise because the school emphasises them well. One pupil said, 'Healthy food gives us energy and helps us feel fit.' The Active Mark award is testimony to the benefits for pupils as a result of the school's strong provision. Pupils show independence and care for others by raising funds for various charities. Along with the work of the school council, this shows the pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the school and wider communities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. As a result, pupils do not make enough progress despite their good attitudes and behaviour. Good practice is evident but it has not always been shared and weaknesses have not been tackled with sufficient rigour.

Teaching in the Foundation Stage is unsatisfactory because planning, organisation and the sporadic use of the outdoor facilities mean there is not enough emphasis on helping children to learn. Teaching is also unsatisfactory overall in Key Stage 1, but there is better teaching in Year 2. The main weaknesses are linked to the poor use of assessment information, which leads to a lack of challenge in lessons. The pace of learning, therefore, is too slow.

In Key Stage 2, teachers plan carefully and make the work enjoyable. Explanations are usually clear, often using interactive boards well to stimulate or help pupils to understand new ideas. Nevertheless, too often, teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are too low and advice on how to improve through the marking, lacks clarity. As a result, there is too much poor presentation or unfinished work in books, and the more able pupils do not progress as quickly as they should and could do much more. For example, in Year 6, pupils were engaged in low-level colouring activities in history.

Teachers' marking and the use of learning targets have been priorities for the school recently. There are some good examples, for instance in Year 2, but more work is needed to ensure that pupils understand how well they are doing and exactly what they have to do to improve.

Pupils with extra learning needs respond well to praise and the additional help they receive.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and includes a good range of enrichment activities, which include popular after-schools clubs, visits and visitors. Personal, social and health education are strong and promote the pupils' good personal development. The school is beginning to address the backlog of underachievement by organising English and mathematics learning in groups made up according to the pupils' ability. The impact of this is sometimes lessened because there is a lack of understanding that work still has to be matched to individual pupils' needs.

Opportunities for pupils to use their skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) across the full range of subjects are increasing. Provision for ICT is satisfactory.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The good care shown to pupils is much appreciated by parents, and pupils say that they feel safe and well looked after. Procedures and practices for safeguarding, child protection and for monitoring behaviour and attendance are robust and effective. Vulnerable pupils are supported well by good links with outside agencies. Recent developments in the school's assessment systems are slowly beginning to improve the quality of academic guidance, but the picture remains patchy. Academic guidance is still weak and is a reason for slow progress. Nevertheless,

there are signs that pupils are beginning to be aware of how they can improve their work, particularly in Year 2.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Since the last inspection, leaders and management have been ineffective in improving important aspects of the school's work, such as self-evaluation, teaching, learning and the use of assessment information. As a result, the rate of improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory and there has been a decline in the quality of teaching, learning and in the progress pupils make. Monitoring of teaching and learning is weak because lesson observations predominantly focus on the teacher's performance rather than the quality and rate of pupils' learning. There has been some improvement very recently because of increased activity and support from the local authority and, in particular, the work of the part-time executive headteacher and acting headteacher. The focus on improving the pupils' behaviour, for example, has proved to be successful. However, planning for school improvement is poor because there is a lack of rigour in the way in which leaders, managers and governors have judged how well initiatives are succeeding. Governance has been reliant on receiving information from the school without checking or understanding key messages. Recently there has been a complete change in the governing body and the governors are already improving the way they evaluate the work of the school.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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	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	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?	4
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?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
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	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

7 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Cleator Moor, CA25 5DG

You will remember that Mrs Sharkey, Mr Oglesby and I visited your school recently. We want to thank you very much for the welcome, hospitality and help you gave us during the inspection. We also want to tell you what we found out about your school.

What we particularly liked about your school:

- your good behaviour and the help you provide for all concerned
- the obvious enjoyment you show in some lessons and around the school
- the way the school organises lots of extra activities for you, such as visits, visitors and clubs.

It is clear that the school has gone through a difficult time recently with lots of changes and more to come. Also, we know that you like your school and want it to be good, but it is clear that you could be doing much better in your learning. We have judged that 'special measures' are necessary. This means that the school will receive extra help and inspectors will visit regularly to check on the progress made by the school. These measures are necessary to make sure:

- you do better in your learning and make more progress, particularly in writing, mathematics and science
- that you have to think hard about your work because it is challenging, but possible to do
- you know what you have to do to learn even more
- good checks are made on how well you are learning in all classes.

In September, you will have a new headteacher and it is important that you join with her and your teachers to bring about the improvements.

The team wish you well for the future and good luck.

Yours sincerely

John Heap

Lead inspector