

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104918
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	308705
Inspection date	1 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Derek Aitken

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	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	290
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs R Travers
Headteacher	Mr G Bevin
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2003
School address	Radnor Drive Churchtown Southport Lancashire PR9 9RR
Telephone number	01704 225906
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement in mathematics, the effectiveness of the tracking systems and intervention programmes in supporting pupils' achievement and the quality of strategic planning and the school's self-evaluation systems. The inspector gathered evidence from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, policies and minutes, parents' questionnaires and observation of the school at work. Interviews were conducted with senior members of staff, representatives of the governing body and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in similar detail. The evidence found the school's assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, to be justified, except the quality of care, guidance and support which was judged to be good rather than outstanding.

Description of the school

This slightly larger than average sized school is situated in a residential area to the north of the town of Southport. Pupils come from a variety of backgrounds but social and economic circumstances are generally favourable. The vast majority of pupils are White British and a small number of pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. On entry to Reception, children's skills are above those expected for their age. The headteacher took up his post in September 2006. The school has gained a number of awards this year, including the National Healthy Schools Award and the Eco-Schools Bronze Award.

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 outstanding features, where pupils attain high standards and achieve well. Parents and carers are highly supportive of the school and praise the contribution it makes to the all-round education of their children. In their words, the school is a place where children greatly enjoy their learning and 'Children and staff go in the school gates with a smile on their faces'.

Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and standards are above national expectations when they begin Year 1. The most recent national assessments of Year 2 pupils demonstrated that standards were well above average, maintaining the pattern of recent years. The school's results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2007 were high. This represents good progress for this very able group of pupils. The current cohort of Year 6 pupils is already working towards attaining well above average levels. Achievement in English, especially in reading, is very good. This is the result of a successful emphasis on building up this skill from an early age and parental support for its development. The school recognises that standards in mathematics are slightly lower and is putting plans in place to redress this minor imbalance. Overall, boys and girls achieve equally well. Pupils with learning difficulties and those at an early stage of learning English as an additional language achieve at a similar level because they are supported effectively in their work.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Particular strengths are pupils' spiritual, moral and social development, the contribution pupils make to the community and their enjoyment of school. Expectations of the pupils in these aspects are high and they rise to the challenge well. This is reflected, for example, in the well organised Masses, which pupils look forward to eagerly because they are given excellent opportunities to make collective and individual contributions. Pupils are mature, self-reliant and perceptive and the older children value their responsibilities, which they perform very well. The very good pastoral systems strike an effective balance between nurturing the pupils and promoting their self-confidence. As one of the Year 6 structured play leaders commented, 'We love to see the smiles on the faces of the younger children'. This is characteristic of the pupils' caring attitudes. Pupils enjoy a wide range of subjects and extra-curricular activities, especially sport. They have exploited these increasing opportunities well and are proud of their sporting successes. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and have a good knowledge of how to stay safe. They behave very well and their commitment to the school is also shown in their exceptional attendance.

The school's procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare are regularly monitored and updated. Strong relationships ensure that pupils are confident in sharing concerns about their work or personal problems with adults. The school has effective liaison with outside agencies to support pupils with identified needs. Pupils' strong grasp of basic skills sets them up very well for later life.

The targets the school sets for pupils are suitably challenging. Managers are successfully implementing a tracking system based on comprehensive data on pupils' progress. At this relatively early stage of development, its impact on pupils' progress is satisfactory, rather than good.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Relationships are very good and teachers capitalise effectively on pupils' responsiveness and very positive attitudes.

Prior learning is recapped well and most lessons move at a good pace as routines are well established and pupils settle to work quickly, both individually and in pairs. Teachers plan for an appropriate mix of teacher-directed and independent work. Questioning is precise and encourages pupils to think hard. While teachers' marking is conscientious and often contains detailed comments, opportunities are missed in lessons for pupils to assess their own learning and so gain a better understanding of their next steps.

The curriculum supports pupils' personal development very well and it makes a good contribution to their learning. Recent initiatives to widen the scope of extra-curricular activities have been enthusiastically supported by the pupils. These include developing links with schools abroad and raising pupils' awareness of social issues, for example, through the Eco-group. The curriculum is monitored closely and there are some good opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to reinforce their basic skills. Individual education plans and modifications to the timetable, for example, setting for English and mathematics in Year 6, support the needs of pupils well.

Leadership and management are good. The new headteacher has a strong vision for the future of the school and is working successfully to promote pupils' personal development and to improve systems for monitoring pupils' progress and the performance of the school. He has enthused the staff, who are steadily acquiring a deeper understanding of the strengths and areas for development in pupils' achievement. As a result, staff have a clear idea of priorities for future improvement. The school has taken considerable strides forward in the past year. Governors support the work of the school well and hold the school closely to account. The school provides good value for money and is well set for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage provides a good education for the youngest children. Children make good progress in all areas of their learning. When they leave the Reception class, the majority have reached, and some have exceeded, the early learning goals. Children make particularly good progress in areas such as physical development and personal and social development. In the latter case, this is because teachers reinforce these qualities very effectively when children are learning other subjects, such as literacy. Polite behaviour is modelled well and, as a result, relationships are very good. Children are very eager to learn and take a full part in lessons. This is the key to their good progress as, on occasions, some opportunities are missed to make use of assessment information to direct their learning more sharply. The learning environment is attractive and its layout and resources support the good, balanced curriculum. The Foundation Stage is led and managed well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Involve pupils more effectively in assessing their work to help them learn even better.
- Ensure that recent initiatives and new systems are firmly embedded and precisely evaluated in order to raise achievement to the highest level

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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.

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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I visited your school recently to find out how well you were learning. Thank you for making me welcome and being so helpful when I asked you questions. I was lucky to have the opportunity to speak to some of you at greater length. You told me how much you enjoyed school and the reasons for that were very clear to me during my short visit. I was very impressed to hear about your sporting successes and the contribution you are making to school life, for example, as play leaders and on the Eco-committee. I was struck by how well you respected and valued each other.

A major highlight of the day for you (and for me!) was the Mass. This summed up so many things that are really good about your personal and social development, which I judge to be outstanding. Your excellent behaviour, very positive attitudes and willingness to play a full part in the Mass stood out a mile and contributed to its success. Of course, you cannot do these things on your own! The school staff and priest played their part in organising the occasion so well for you.

I judge all other aspects of the work of the school to be good and so it provides you with a good education. It helps you reach high standards in your work and achieve well. You have good opportunities to develop your academic talents. The staff teach you well and make your learning interesting, which help you make good progress. I agree with you that the staff look after you well. You know and appreciate how much they have done recently to help you live more healthily. You can help by trying to persuade the small number of children who prefer to eat sweets and salty crisps to follow your good lead!

I also agree with you that the new headteacher, well supported by the staff, is working well to make school even better for you. There are some good things in the pipeline, such as more opportunities for gifted and talented pupils, which I know you are looking forward to. I have asked the headteacher and staff to do two other things. Firstly, to ensure that you are all involved better in checking your own work to help you learn more quickly. Secondly, for all the staff to work very closely together to check how well the actions they are taking are working, and how the new systems for keeping an eye on your progress are developing.