

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Birstall

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107752
Local Authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	309495
Inspection date	11 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Julie Price Grimshaw

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	
School	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Anthony Wilson
Headteacher	Mr A Rush
Date of previous school inspection	31 March 2003
School address	Nova Lane Birstall Batley West Yorkshire WF17 9LQ
Telephone number	01924 326747
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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 in detail the following issues: the progress made by pupils across the school; the quality of teaching and learning; and the quality of pastoral care and academic guidance. Evidence was gathered from: the school's self-evaluation; published national assessment data; the school's own assessment records, policies and minutes; observation of the school at work; interviews with members of staff, pupils and governors; and analysis of the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This is a slightly larger than average school. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and none are at the early stages of learning English.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This outstanding school thoroughly deserves its excellent reputation within the local community. Pupils are proud to attend St Patrick's and their parents are delighted with the school. Many of them are keen to express their appreciation for the hard work carried out by the dedicated team of staff. One view, which is typical of the majority, is, 'I feel very privileged that my child attends St Patrick's- a lovely school where every child is cherished.' The school is cheerful and welcoming, and many pupils and parents comment positively on the 'family atmosphere' and 'community spirit'.

Children enter the Nursery with skills that are slightly above typical expectations. From this point they make excellent progress to reach standards that are well above average by the end of Year 2. Pupils continue to make outstanding progress, so that by the end of Year 6 standards are significantly above average in English, mathematics and science. This has been the case since the last inspection, with standards remaining consistently high in all subjects. Very careful tracking of pupils' progress throughout the school enables staff to provide individually tailored support, ensuring that all pupils achieve as well as they can. This is particularly true of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who make exceptional progress.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school's Catholic teaching is at the heart of this work, although pupils also have an excellent awareness of other faiths and cultures. They love coming to school, as shown by their attendance, which is above average. Pupils say that school is a, 'safe and friendly place, where you can learn while having a lot of fun'. Their behaviour, both in the classroom and around the school, is exemplary. Pupils are very articulate and confident and many show remarkable levels of maturity for their age. They have a good understanding of the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle. The school has an impressive record of raising funds for charity and pupils enjoy making a contribution to both the school and the wider community. Their excellent basic skills, together with their involvement in a variety of fund-raising ventures mean that they are extremely well prepared for the next steps in their education. This view is endorsed by parents, typified by the comment, 'Two of my children are now at high school and I am positive that the grounding received at St Patrick's has benefited them immensely.'

Outstanding achievement and very high standards are due largely to the excellent quality teaching and learning found in the great majority of lessons. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly, building on pupils' prior knowledge and skills. Very good relationships are evident in all lessons and teachers maintain a lively pace, thus ensuring that pupils are constantly occupied. Teachers use questioning very skilfully and are successful in matching work to pupils' needs. They are particularly competent in the use of resources, including information and communication technology, to enhance teaching and learning. Teachers have very high expectations of their pupils and are good role models in terms of their use of vocabulary, which helps pupils to reach very high standards of spoken English. Pupils respond with keenness and enthusiasm, remaining focused and engaged with the tasks set during lessons. Teachers assess pupils' work accurately and most marking is constructive and encouraging. However, in a minority of cases, teachers' marking does not clearly indicate what pupils need to do next in order to improve their work.

The good quality curriculum ensures that pupils benefit from a wide range of activities, both in and out of the classroom. There are many opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills across a variety of subjects, which contributes to the high standards in

these basic skills. Sporting activities, provided in conjunction with the local specialist sports college, enhance the curriculum, as does the work of the local authority music support service in delivering instrumental tuition to a large number of pupils. A range of visitors enriches the curriculum and pupils say that they love the school trips to local places of interest.

Parents recognise and appreciate the outstanding quality of care provided for all pupils. There is a great deal of emphasis on inclusion and meeting the needs of individuals. The excellent support provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a significant strength of the school's work. Staff work very effectively with outside agencies in order to ensure that all pupils receive the support they need. This is especially apparent for those pupils with disabilities who require highly specialised support. The school has established very effective links with parents and this has resulted in high quality collaborative work that helps to ensure that pupils are suitably supported, both in school and at home. Pupils understand the value of mutual support, saying, 'It's very important that we always show we care for each other.' Excellent systems for tracking pupils' progress result in staff providing very good quality academic support. Effective strategies ensure that any underachieving pupils are soon back on track.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher has helped the whole staff team to build on the past success of the school and maintain very high standards, both in terms of academic work and personal development. A strong collaborative approach has been established amongst all staff, who show particularly high levels of commitment and dedication to their work. Middle managers, such as subject leaders, are actively involved in monitoring the school's work. Rigorous systems ensure that any areas for development are highlighted, drawn together and fed into school development planning. There is a very effective cycle of monitoring, evaluation and action planning. As a result of these systems the school has an accurate view of its strengths and areas for development. Governance is good. Governors carry out all statutory responsibilities and assist managers by discussing issues relating to the school's work in detail. Resources are deployed with exceptional skill and care and, as a consequence, the school provides outstanding value for money. Good progress has been made since the last inspection and the school demonstrates good capacity for future improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Very good quality teaching in the Foundation Stage results in children making good progress in all areas of learning. Teachers and support staff plan work very carefully, ensuring thorough coverage of all curriculum areas. There is a good balance of activities, with children happy to take the initiative in making choices about their learning whilst being supported very effectively by staff. Children are also very keen to come together as a group in order to participate in adult-led activities, as shown during a session where they were delighted and enthralled by the teacher's excellent use of the interactive whiteboard. The care shown by staff in welcoming children into the Foundation Stage ensures that they settle into the school community very quickly. This was demonstrated during the inspection, when staff and children enthusiastically sang a 'welcome song' to three new class members and presented them with specially made cards.

Staff and children are still in the process of moving in to a new purpose-built area within the school. Although this provides a very good learning environment, the outdoor play area is not yet developed and therefore opportunities for outdoor play are currently limited. However, this is in the process of being addressed by the school. The Foundation Stage is very well led

and managed. As a result of the good quality provision, many children have exceeded the goals expected of them by the time they enter Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all marking of work clearly indicates what pupils need to do next in order to improve.

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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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	2
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?	1
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?	1
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
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	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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**

Thank you very much for making me feel so welcome in your school. I really enjoyed talking to you, hearing your views and watching you learn.

You told me that you think your school is 'fantastic' and I agree with you. St Patrick's is an outstanding school and your parents were full of praise for the work of the staff in caring for you and helping you to achieve so well. Standards at your school are very high indeed and pupils do very well in the tests at the end of Year 6. One of the reasons for this is that the staff keep a very close watch on the progress each one of you is making, so that they can provide extra help if you need it.

You are fortunate to have some excellent teachers at St Patrick's. They make sure that there are lots of fun activities to help you learn and also that your work is set at just the right level for you - not too easy and not too hard! I know that you like the interactive whiteboards and I agree that your teachers use these well. Your teachers are very good at assessing exactly where you are up to with your work, but you told me that occasionally the marking in your books does not always tell you how you can make your work better. I agree, and I have suggested that the staff look at ways of making sure that you always know exactly what you need to do to improve your work.

One of the things that impressed me most about your school was your superb behaviour and the way that you spoke so confidently. I was also very pleased to hear you talk about the importance of caring for each other. Your fund-raising work is absolutely brilliant - I was amazed to see how much you have raised for charities!

All the things you do at St Patrick's will help to prepare you well for the next stage of your education. I know that your headteacher and all the staff are very dedicated and want the very best for each one of you. I am delighted that you are so proud to belong to your school and wish you well for the future.