

St Patrick's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111687
Local Authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	310662
Inspection dates	2–3 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Yvonne Clare

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	263
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Chris Wilson
Headteacher	Mrs Nora Moffatt (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2003
School address	Lingfield Road Stockton-on-Tees TS19 7PL
Telephone number	01642 580850
Fax number	01642 570697

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Patrick's is a popular, larger than average sized Catholic school. It was built in 1963 and in the year 2000 a new wing was added. Most pupils come from White British heritage. The school has few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average and there is a lower than average percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In the recent past, the school has had significant staffing changes and long term absences, particularly in the Foundation Stage. The acting headteacher, who has steered the school through this period, has been in post for two terms.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. Its strength is in the pastoral support and care it provides for the pupils.

Achievement is satisfactory. Children join the school with skills and knowledge which are generally above what is typical for their age and by the end of Year 6, standards are above average. The results of the national tests for Year 6 pupils in 2006 were above the national average in English, mathematics and science. Within this overall picture, the pupils' progress is patchy and they do not always do as well as they should. Progress in the Foundation Stage is inadequate. At Key Stage 1, pupils make good progress so at the end of Year 2 standards are above average. In Key Stage 2, pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well and make good progress.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers establish good relationships with pupils and manage them well. Pupils are keen to learn and their behaviour is good, although in some lessons attention and interest wanes when they are expected to listen for too long. The work of teaching assistants contributes well to the pace of learning for pupils who need additional support. However, not all teaching takes sufficient account of assessment information to target work at the correct level. As a result, the pace of learning across the school is inconsistent and not all groups of learners are always sufficiently challenged by the tasks they are asked to do.

Parents hold the school in high regard, describing it as a 'happy and caring' school. They are rightly confident that their children are well cared for and enjoy school. The curriculum is satisfactory. It is enriched by a wide range of clubs. The school provides well for pupils' personal development and they are confident that adults will always help them when necessary. Good links with the wider community involve pupils in educational visits and local events which enhance their opportunities for learning and promote their appreciation of their role within the community. Most pupils leave the school well prepared for future learning.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The acting headteacher has a clear vision for the school, has correctly identified priorities for improvement and has begun to introduce new approaches to make them a reality. However, these have not yet become embedded in practice. Most of the subject leaders are new to their posts and are enthusiastic, but have not had enough time to develop their roles to make a significant contribution to the development of the school. Despite the difficulties it has had to deal with recently, the school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and demonstrates a satisfactory capacity for further improvement. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 4

The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage is inadequate because of weaknesses in teaching and learning. Children spend too long in whole class sessions and there are not enough challenging activities for children to carry out on their own. The curriculum does not cover the six different areas of learning consistently enough over time. The school has correctly identified that assessment systems have been unreliable, but they remain rudimentary and staff do not have information about children's previous achievement. Consequently, learning does not match children's individual needs well enough. Staff take good care of the children who stay safe and healthy and partnership with parents is satisfactory. The headteacher has successfully

resolved the difficulties caused by the long term absences of staff but the lack of a dedicated coordinator with specialist knowledge of this key stage means that currently, leadership and management of the Foundation Stage is inadequate.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the effectiveness of the Foundation Stage.
- Use assessment systems consistently in lessons to ensure that activities challenge all groups of pupils and build on their previous learning.
- Develop the role of subject leaders.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Children enter the Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills that are generally above those typical for their age. They do not make enough progress so that by the time they are ready to go into Year 1, they are only achieving that which is normally expected for children of their age. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and they achieve well. In 2006, teachers' assessments showed standards were above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.

The results of the 2006 Year 6 national tests were above the national average in English, mathematics and science and pupils make satisfactory progress overall in Years 3 to 6. Over the last two years, the results of the tests show standards in science have been the weakest of the three subjects. However, in 2007, standards, particularly at the higher levels, improved following a school focus on opportunities to learn through experimentation, investigation and discussion. With regular support from learning support assistants, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Behaviour is good and pupils are polite and helpful to visitors. They play together well and enjoy the play equipment on offer to them in the playground. There is a prefect system in school, giving older pupils some opportunity to help younger ones. Attendance is above the national average and it is a measure of pupils' enjoyment in their education that there is virtually no unauthorised absence. A variety of visits and visitors contribute to pupils' good understanding about keeping safe. They know about healthy eating and how to look after themselves. The school is currently working towards the Healthy Schools award and has achieved the 'Sportsmark' standard. Key Stage 1 pupils enjoy healthy snacks as part of the free fruit scheme and older pupils are also asked to bring fruit for their morning break. Pupils know about their role in the community and demonstrate this by their positive relationships with people from other cultures and by their links with India and Kenya. The school is twinned with a school in India and pupils and the local community have provided considerable funding for a nursery school in Kenya, named after St Patrick's in recognition of its help. Most recently, pupils have become involved

in supporting a water aid scheme in Uganda. As a result of their good academic and personal skills, pupils are well prepared for moving on to the next phase of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. It is good in Key Stage 1 and there are some good features in Key Stage 2. Staff work well with teaching assistants, who effectively support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, resulting in good progress. Teachers promote good relationships with their pupils and manage behaviour well. This results in pupils developing positive attitudes to their learning. Assessment is not always used well enough in lessons to make sure that new learning builds systematically on previous knowledge and skills. Therefore, activities do not sufficiently challenge different pupils' needs. In a few lessons, whole class sessions are too long and do not give pupils enough chances to discuss and record their work. In the good lessons there is a brisk pace and teachers balance the different parts of the lesson effectively so that the pupils can make the most of their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. The school ensures that there is a balance across different subjects and that statutory requirements are met. The curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and contributes to their good progress. In the Foundation Stage all the areas of learning are not covered well enough, but in the rest of the school the system of teachers working in age group teams ensures that planning is consistent in the mixed aged classes and works well. This is helping teachers to evaluate the content of the curriculum more effectively, but this is in its early stages and the curriculum is not planned closely enough to match the particular needs of the pupils. Teachers in Key Stage 1 have introduced blocks of time for the curriculum, linking subjects and making it more meaningful to the pupils. This is working well, but is not consistent across the school. Appropriate links are made between information and communication technology and other subjects. The curriculum is enriched with a wide range of clubs including a residential visit for older pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of care, guidance and support for pupils is satisfactory. The majority of parents praise the school in this respect and are happy with their children's progress. Pupils themselves understand the system of rewards and sanctions, speaking at length about the 'goody boxes' and the house points. They know they are well cared for and can talk to an adult should they need to. As a result, they feel safe and secure in school. The school liaises very closely with other agencies to ensure adequate care and support for pupils. Health and safety routines, risk assessments and safeguarding requirements are in place. Child protection procedures are clear and all staff are trained in these. Systems to assess and track pupils' progress are in place but are not yet completely effective, particularly in helping teachers plan work to meet pupils' needs. Planning to cater for the needs of learners with learning difficulties/disabilities, including the deployment of teaching assistants, is good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management, including governance are satisfactory. The quality of the school's self-evaluation is satisfactory. As a result, the acting headteacher, although in post for a relatively short time, has been able to correctly focus the school on improving achievement, particularly in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2. The school's documentation, parent questionnaires, discussion with governors and reports by the local authority show that school improvement planning correctly identifies the school's current needs. However, day-to-day practice is currently inconsistent across all classes and has not yet begun to really impact on the pace of pupils' learning. The headteacher has appropriately delegated curriculum areas to subject leaders according to their expertise. They are enthusiastic and share the headteacher's determination for improvement, but the majority of the subject leaders are new in post and they have not had enough time in order to drive their subjects forward. The school's capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

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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?	3
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	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

4 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Patrick's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Stockton-on-Tees, TS19 7PL

Thank you for the lovely welcome you gave us in your school this week. You helped us to enjoy our visit and to find out all we needed to know about how well you work and learn. We noticed that you are friendly, kind and thoughtful with each other too, so your school is a safe and happy place.

Please say thank you to your parents for returning our questionnaires. We know that your parents are pleased with the way staff care for you and help you to learn. We were impressed with the way you listened so well to your teachers and how kind you were to each other. You and your teachers work hard and this leads to good standards in literacy, numeracy and science, especially now that you are planning more of your own investigations. Your headteacher really wants to help you to 'be the best you can be'. To help you learn even better, we have asked your school to:

- make sure that information on your progress is used to plan lessons that enable all of you to get even better at your work
- speed up the progress that the youngest children make
- let the teachers who are responsible for all the different subjects get to know what you enjoy and how they can improve their subjects to help you learn even more.

We hope you continue to enjoy your learning at St Patrick's.

Best wishes

Mrs Yvonne Clare

Lead Inspector