

St Patrick's C of E School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112318
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	310851
Inspection dates	21–22 February 2008
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 category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	63
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Dan Hunt
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Irving
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2003
School address	Endmoor Gatebeck Road Kendal Cumbria LA8 0HH
Telephone number	01539 567388
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small rural school. Pupils are educated in three mixed-age classes. Class 1 includes pupils from Foundation Stage, Years 1 and 2, Class 2 has pupils from Years 3 and 4 and Class 3 has pupils from Years 5 and 6. The school benefits from access to before- and after-school care. There has been a trend of increasing numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The percentage of these pupils is currently above the national average, and in some year groups, over twice the national average. All pupils are of White British heritage and none require support for English as an additional language. The percentage eligible for free school meals is below the national average. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher was unavoidably absent. A village pre-school group is based at the school each afternoon.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Patrick's is a good school in which pupils grow into mature, rounded individuals, very well prepared for being good citizens of the future. Pupils benefit from good levels of care and personal guidance and reach excellent levels of personal development and well-being. Parents are highly supportive of the school. They feel very strongly that it is developing rapidly under the strong but caring leadership of the headteacher. Pupils love coming to school, which is an important factor in their good attendance. Respect and consideration typify pupils' behaviour, which is outstanding. Many parents comment on the family feel to the school. Inspection findings support this view; it is like a family within which everyone has a clear role. Pupils thrive on the wide range of responsibilities expected of them, including managing playtimes, helping younger ones during lunch and being willing participants in the school house system.

Academic achievement is good. The school's performance data must be treated with care because of the small numbers in each year group and the influence one pupil has on data. Standards reflect the 2007 results in the national tests which were average at the end of both key stages. Those with learning disabilities, of which there was an above average proportion, made good progress. Pupils with average and higher ability also did well, and the percentage exceeding the level expected for their age was above the national average. Pupils particularly like writing, mathematics, science and art. It is not a surprise, therefore that inspection findings show that pupils achieve well for their ability in these subjects but also do well in aspects of music.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are caring and knowledgeable and provide lessons that interest pupils and generate enthusiasm for learning. Practical investigations, such as those seen amongst Key Stage 1 pupils retelling the events of their visit to the Lakeland Museum, capture pupils' imaginations. Good teamwork, and the good use of assessment, by teaching and support staff, successfully meets the needs of all pupils. The good curriculum is generally well planned, and enriched with a range of additional activities. Links between subjects are not exploited enough for pupils to further extend their skills in writing, numeracy and information communication technology (ICT). The curriculum does well in developing amongst pupils a very good understanding of the choices required to stay fit and healthy and avoid danger.

Leadership and management are good with excellent governance. The headteacher has built a very strong and caring team who are enthusiastically working to improve all areas of school life. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school has a good understanding of the school's performance and where improvement is needed. Pupils benefit from very well managed accommodation which has some innovative features. Outdoor resources for pupils' learning and play are excellent. Resources are wisely used and the budget is shrewdly spent in order to bring the budget back into balance.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The provision in the Foundation Stage is good. The level of development of children starting school in Reception varies each year and depends upon the composition of each group. Taking this variability into consideration children make good progress although they could do better in some elements of creative and physical development. The standards reached at the end of the Foundation Stage vary considerably from year to year and the current children are expected

to be close to the level expected for their age. Teaching is good. The approach to learning is lively and interactive so that children enjoy themselves and are eager to learn. They think for themselves and behave well. The accommodation is good. Although the focus is clearly on learning through practical activities there are aspects of physical and creative development that could receive more attention. The children from Foundation Stage are taught in a class alongside pupils from Years 1 and 2 and the planning for the different ages is not sharp enough especially as children transfer from the Foundation Stage to Year 1. As a result, some pupils in Year 1 miss out on essential early years' activities still suitable for their needs. Children feel safe in the Foundation Stage because every child receives good personal support. There are very good links with parents and with the pre-school group housed in the school. These make the start of school life as stress free as possible for both parents and children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the opportunities for pupils to extend their skills of writing, numeracy and ICT in other subjects.
- Refine the Foundation Stage curriculum so that pupils are involved in more creative and physical activities and there is better transition from Reception to Year 1.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Given the variable level of skills that children start school with they make good progress. They build well on the skills developed in the Foundation Stage and many pupils reach the level expected for their age at the end of Year 2. This was reflected in the teachers' assessments in 2007 which were average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in Year 6 are broadly average although they vary from year to year because of the small numbers involved and this can be seen in the results of national tests. Results in 2007 were average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities made good progress and the more able pupils were successfully challenged. An above average percentage of pupils exceeded the level expected for their age in each subject. The school has set challenging targets for Year 6 and is well placed to achieve them. Across the school, pupils achieve well in reading, write neatly and with confidence and make good progress in developing mathematical and scientific ideas. There are also strengths in art and design and elements of music.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. They contribute to pupils' good progress and achievement. Smiles abound, reflecting the pupils' love of school and their good attendance. In lessons, they work very hard and do their best. They are not shy in trying out new things. One pupil's comment typified that of many, 'Lessons are really good because we are made to think for ourselves...it isn't much fun when you get everything right all of the time!' Behaviour is excellent. Pupils naturally treat others with consideration and respect. Top quality school meals support the school's drive to promote healthy eating. Initiatives such as tending their own organic vegetable plot and then eating the produce contribute to the pupils' good knowledge of nutrition. Pupils are very safety conscious for their age and are naturally caring of others. Older pupils naturally fall into their expected roles of helping younger ones when leading outdoor play as well as assisting younger

ones during lunch. In their time in school, pupils become confident, mature individuals. Very good social skills are developed and they acquire very good attitudes to learning. Their involvement in the Eco club develops a good understanding of important ecological issues. Pupils are extremely well equipped to do well in future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good with particular strengths in Key Stage 2. Lessons are carefully planned to successfully meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities whilst also extending the skills and knowledge of the able, gifted and talented. Pupils know at the outset what is expected of them and this gives a focus to the tasks they are set. High expectations are made with regard to presenting pupils' work. This gives pupils a sense of pride in what they do. Many opportunities are given for pupils to consider their own thoughts and draw their own conclusions. Teachers make lessons relevant to pupils and at times make good use of Interactive Whiteboards. For example, during a literacy lesson, a video clip from 'The Shirt Machine' was very skilfully used to prompt a mature discussion about which words are most suited to relating events in time. Pupils say they enjoy lessons best when they are set practical tasks that involve more than just listening and writing. Most lessons achieve this. During a good mathematics lesson, pupils were very keen to share their ideas in order to solve challenging mathematical word problems. Marking is generally good because it not only praises pupils, and corrects work, but also guides them towards improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a good balance between developing pupils' academic skills and knowledge and their artistic and sporting talents. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very good. Strong and effective curriculum strategies contribute to the pupils' excellent personal development. Very strong links with the community enhance many aspects of the curriculum. Pupils are frequent contributors to prestigious events such as the dance festival at the Brewery Centre and in exhibiting their excellent quality artwork in the Westmorland Show. Very productive links with a high school benefit pupils greatly; for example, in sport and in challenge for the more able in mathematics and science. Educational visitors and visits are planned to complement and enhance learning. Although lessons are well enriched, the planning of links between subjects is underdeveloped. This holds back pupils' achievement because they have few opportunities to practise their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care and guidance are good with outstanding levels of pastoral support. The school is a safe, happy community which enables pupils to grow in confidence. Pupils and parents are quite right when they say that all staff know every pupil well and that any concerns will be listened to. All statutory requirements to maintain Child Protection and safeguard pupils are in place and very well managed. Assessment has improved considerably in the last two years. It provides accurate information about each pupil's progress and is used to remove underachievement

where it exists. Skilled and dedicated teaching assistants give good support to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, making sure they make good progress. Although marking is good overall, pupils are not as involved in the assessment process as they might be and are not clear enough about what they need to aim for to get to the highest possible levels.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good with excellent governance. The headteacher, together with a very effective senior teacher, has established a strong ethos throughout the school where old fashioned values predominate. For example, care and respect is the norm and high expectations exist for pupils' to achieve well, both in terms of their personal and academic development. The school has improved since the last inspection, after a period when it regressed. Staff morale is high and there is a shared vision to continue to follow the clear educational direction set by the headteacher. The school confidently and accurately monitors its performance. The process could be refined further because some new initiatives have yet to contribute fully to the process of school self-evaluation. Academic targets for pupils are effectively used to sharpen the focus on standards and raise achievement. The governing body has an excellent grasp on what goes on in the school and works tirelessly to support staff, pupils and parents. The strategic management of finances is very good. Decisive actions have reduced costs and inroads are being made into the deficit, brought about by staffing difficulties in the past. Given the current circumstances, the school has a good potential for continued improvement.

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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	3
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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	2
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	1
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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Patrick's C of E School, Cumbria, LA8 0HH

My day with you is memorable. I have lovely recollections of extended discussions with you about your views not only of the school, but also of such important matters as the impact of climate change on the future. I am very impressed by how mature and thoughtful you are and how exceptionally well you behave.

You are quite right that your school is good; indeed in some ways it is outstanding. Your hard work in lessons, your pride in what you do and your desire to help others are very good indeed. I was pleased that you enjoy school. This is because of the good lessons you are given and the way all adults work hard to help you. You are achieving well for your abilities. Good support given to those of you who find learning difficult, means that you also do well with your work. Although your writing is generally good and you do as well as you can in mathematics and ICT, I feel that many of you would do even better, if subjects were more closely linked. This would give you new and challenging situations to apply and develop your skills and help you to do even better. I have asked the school to work with you in improving this area of the curriculum.

The children starting school in the Reception are taught well and settle in quickly to school life. Some aspects though could be better. As pupils move into Key Stage 1, some need still to learn in the same way as they did in Reception. I have asked the school to consider enabling this to happen.

Your school has caring teachers, support staff and dedicated headteacher. The school governors are doing an excellent job supporting everyone in the school.

You have every right to be proud of yourselves. I hope you always do your best and continue to make sure that you think of others first. The school is doing an excellent job at preparing for your lives ahead. I wish you all the best for your future.

Yours sincerely

Dave Byrne

Lead inspector