

Priory Roman Catholic Primary School, Torquay

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113474
Local Authority	Torbay
Inspection number	311287
Inspection dates	19–20 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Laurie Lewin

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	172
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Cronin
Headteacher	Sarah Barreto
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2004
School address	St Catherine's Road Torquay TQ1 4NZ
Telephone number	01803 328480
Fax number	01803 326369

Age group	4-11
Inspection dates	19–20 March 2008
Inspection number	311287

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small primary school. Approximately 80% of the pupils of this denominational school come from Catholic families. Although it varies considerably each year, children's attainment on entry is more often slightly below the expected levels. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average as is the proportion with statements of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities varies a lot from year to year and in some year groups can rise to as high as nearly half of the pupils being on the special educational needs register. Pupils are mainly White British with a small minority coming from other cultural backgrounds. The proportion of pupils joining the school speaking English as an additional language is similar to the national average. Some of these pupils require extra support to help them initially. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the usual times of joining or transfer is above average. The school has national accreditation as a 'Healthy School' and also has the 'Active Mark' national award. After having fallen a lot in recent years the number of pupils on roll has increased significantly this year. After its last inspection the school entered a phase of staff turbulence. Since the appointment of the current headteacher in 2006 the staffing has been stabilised.

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 and rapidly improving school. Excellent leadership by the headteacher, ably supported by her deputy, enables staff to work together as a strong team. Together they have worked very successfully to put initiatives in place that have accelerated the progress of pupils across the school. This has improved standards and achievement from an inadequate position in recent years to a satisfactory position now. Parents really appreciate the improvements made and the view of many was voiced by one who said, 'The headteacher has been inspirational in helping staff pull things together.' Over a relatively short period, the school has removed a legacy of underachievement. Standards and achievement continue to improve at a good pace because of good teaching that enables pupils to progress well in lessons. Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage. They are on course to reach the expected levels by the time they start Year 1. Pupils mainly reach average levels by the end of Year 6. However, across the school, standards in science are not as good as they are in English and mathematics. Also, work seen indicates that higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.

The school has excellent links with partner organisations and with the community. Its links with and support from the local authority have played a pivotal part in helping to improve pupils' attainment and progress. Staff have fully embraced all training opportunities to improve teaching. Through the excellent relationships they have established with pupils, teachers create a purposeful and hard-working atmosphere in all activities, with pupils well motivated and eager to learn. Teaching assistants do a good job of supporting the teachers and pupils. In particular, they provide valuable extra support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those with English as an additional language, helping these individuals make good progress.

The school provides pupils with an interesting and exciting curriculum enriched by a wide range of extra activities and trips. As well as boosting learning, it helps pupils become very knowledgeable about how to look after themselves. As a result, pupils are fit and healthy and feel safe at all times in school. There are some good examples of pupils practising and extending their writing skills in different subject areas. However, this does not happen consistently in all classes and there is no whole school approach to guide teachers in extending pupils' writing skills in this way. The school has outstanding provision for ensuring pupils' pastoral care. In particular, the strongly encouraging support provided and the very extensive work carried out to boost pupils' social and emotional development make a big impact on helping pupils overcome difficulties and in helping them learn to become confident and mature. As a result, pupils behave well and show much enjoyment with all they do. Top quality assemblies and very good class discussions ensure pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.

The school has excellent systems to track pupils' progress. Some exemplary use of these is evident in the way staff plan work to match pupils' needs in English and mathematics. The school's good leadership and management have been very effective in using the information about pupils' progress to help drive forward improvements in teaching. The headteacher and senior leadership team are now rightly aware of the need to expand the use of assessment systems further to ensure that clearly defined targets are made for raising the achievement of higher attaining pupils. Staff and governors work well together and have an accurate view of what works well and what needs improving.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good provision ensures that children are provided with a rich range of interesting activities. A visitor to the Reception class is immediately struck by the full engagement of all children and the vibrant and happy atmosphere in which they work. Staff work as a strong team so that all individuals and groups are given good support. All of this means that at an early stage the children are developing an eagerness for and enjoyment in learning. Implementing detailed planning for communication, language and literacy and mathematics has been at the heart of recent improvements in provision. However, the school has rightly identified the need to make similar upgrades in the planning for all areas of learning, especially those areas where improved progress is not as marked as in communication, language and literacy and mathematics. Staff make the best use of outdoor areas. However, the lack of cover against the weather, the small size of the area adjacent to the classroom and the distance to the other covered area put constraints on the extent to which staff can boost children's outdoor learning experiences.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that work and targets provided for higher attaining pupils are sufficiently challenging to help them to make the best possible progress.
- Improve standards in science by ensuring that pupils have a full range of opportunities to carry out practical investigations.
- Develop a whole school planned approach that gives pupils a full range of opportunities to develop their writing skills in different areas of the curriculum.

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

The school has taken great strides in improving the performance of pupils in all year groups. As a result, pupils reach average standards by the ends of Years 2 and 6. The school's very good systems for tracking pupils' progress, along with the work that pupils do, show a rapid transition from inadequate achievement in the recent past to satisfactory achievement now. The school has rightly focused efforts on improving standards in English and mathematics by making the most of the local authority's intensive support programme for these subjects. Understandably, therefore, less attention has been given to improving standards in science, which now lag a little behind the other subjects. In particular, pupils have too little knowledge about and experience of carrying out scientific practical investigations. The school knows that one important next step in making pupils' achievement even better is through raising the bar further for higher attaining pupils who are currently not always challenged sufficiently by the work they do.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

'It's good fun at school ... this school inspires you to go out and do things ... you can really trust people here.' These were just a few of the comments from pupils spoken to, which show they feel happy, enthusiastic and safe to come to school. Attendance is good. With their very active school council, healthy school action group and environmental watchdogs group, all

helping to improve school facilities and ensure safety and care of the environment, pupils gain excellent skills in learning to contribute to both the immediate and wider community. Pupils carry out a wide range of jobs around the school in a very responsible way. Pupils have satisfactory skills to ensure their future well-being, but staff rightly recognise the room for improvement here in line with the current drive to raise standards further.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good relationships flourish throughout the school. Staff make full use of this to encourage all individuals, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and who speak English as an additional language, to become confident learners. Pupils appreciate this and say things like, 'Teachers try really hard to make our lessons interesting.' They say they often enjoy even difficult work because 'our teachers have a really good sense of humour'. Teaching has improved in quantum leaps over recent times with staff enthusiastically taking on board the advice from local authority consultants who have been working with them. In particular, they have become adept at using the school's very clear assessment information to inform their planning and match tasks precisely to pupils' needs. The one area where this is still not as precise as it could be is with the work set for higher attaining pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

From Foundation Stage through to Year 6 the curriculum provision is wide-ranging and incorporates many extra activities to boost pupils' learning. Good provision and good quality work are seen in areas such as information and communication technology, music and art. In particular, the school makes really good use of modern technology, with interactive whiteboards, video cameras and a specialised interactive website used very effectively to enliven pupils' learning. This high impact/visual approach has been particularly successful in improving the performance of boys across the school. Through its extensive personal, social and health education programmes, the school is very successful in promoting pupils' personal development. Although some teachers give pupils chances to practise and extend their writing skills in different subjects, this is not consistently the case across the school. As a result, there are missed opportunities to help pupils become even more fluent, expressive and confident writers.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

From the very warm welcome of the school's administration staff through to the friendly approach of all staff, this is a school that exudes a fully caring approach to supporting its pupils and parents. Staff know the pupils well and cater sensitively for their needs. The school is vigilant regarding all matters concerning safeguarding pupils. Good systems are established for supporting pupils with particular needs and for the few arriving at the school speaking a limited amount of English. As a result, these pupils make good progress. Teachers mark books regularly, but sometimes do not give pupils a clear enough steer about how the work can be improved. Much good work has been done to establish clear targets for pupils. However, these are not yet as precise as they could be for higher attaining pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The excellent working partnership between the headteacher and the deputy headteacher gives the school a very dynamic feel. 'No prisoners are taken' in the drive to find ways of continually improving things. This results in all the staff and the governors showing a high level of commitment to make this into the best school possible; as the headteacher says ... 'We are not looking to make this into a good school ... we want it to be outstanding!' With the rapid rate of improvement in standards and achievement in recent times, the markers have been put down to ensure the school moves in the right direction. After having fully embraced external support from the local authority the school is now completely capable of moving ahead under its own steam. Staff have worked well together in improving the use of assessment throughout the school. However, this is still an area of work in progress, with the need for the leadership team to help staff sharpen target setting even more for higher attaining pupils. Also, while clear, individual targets have been a success in helping to improve English, they are not yet clearly defined for pupils in mathematics and science.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	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	2
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	3

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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

21 March 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Priory Roman Catholic Primary School, Torquay TQ1 4NZ

- It was really good fun coming to see you. Thank you for making us so welcome, talking to us and helping us during the inspection. I especially enjoyed the good discussion I had with some of you from Year 6 – wow, what a bunch of chatterboxes! I learned a lot. I think you would all make very good future inspectors! Right now your school is doing a satisfactory job and has improved a lot over the last year. Here are some of the most important bits of the inspection report that I thought you might like to know about.
- You work well and make good progress in lessons; most of you reach average standards in your work by the end of Year 6 although your work in science is not as good as in English and mathematics.
- Your personal development is good; you clearly enjoy your time in school and get on well together and with the staff.
- The school's curriculum is good and you have lots of extra activities, visitors and visits that make it exciting and interesting for you.
- You told us that your teachers work well in teaching you and that they make your lessons interesting and often fun; we agree with you.
- The school is very good at making sure you are properly looked after.
- Your headteacher has done a really good job of helping everyone work together to make things a lot better for you at school and to ensure that things keep improving.

To improve further the school should now:

- ensure that tasks provided for those of you who find work easy are sufficiently challenging to help you progress as much as possible
- improve your work in science by ensuring that you have plenty of opportunities to carry out practical investigations
- make sure that you have lots of opportunities to develop your writing skills in different areas of the curriculum.

I am sure you will want to help by doing the best you can in all of these areas. Thank you again for all your help.

Laurie Lewin Lead inspector

Annex B

21 March 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Priory Roman Catholic Primary School, Torquay TQ1 4NZ

It was really good fun coming to see you. Thank you for making us so welcome, talking to us and helping us during the inspection. I especially enjoyed the good discussion I had with some of you from Year 6 – wow, what a bunch of chatterboxes! I learned a lot. I think you would all make very good future inspectors! Right now your school is doing a satisfactory job and has improved a lot over the last year. Here are some of the most important bits of the inspection report that I thought you might like to know about.

- You work well and make good progress in lessons; most of you reach average standards in your work by the end of Year 6 although your work in science is not as good as in English and mathematics.
- Your personal development is good; you clearly enjoy your time in school and get on well together and with the staff.
- The school's curriculum is good and you have lots of extra activities, visitors and visits that make it exciting and interesting for you.
- You told us that your teachers work well in teaching you and that they make your lessons interesting and often fun; we agree with you.
- The school is very good at making sure you are properly looked after.
- Your headteacher has done a really good job of helping everyone work together to make things a lot better for you at school and to ensure that things keep improving.

To improve further the school should now:

- ensure that tasks provided for those of you who find work easy are sufficiently challenging to help you progress as much as possible
- improve your work in science by ensuring that you have plenty of opportunities to carry out practical investigations
- make sure that you have lots of opportunities to develop your writing skills in different areas of the curriculum.

I am sure you will want to help by doing the best you can in all of these areas. Thank you again for all your help.

Laurie Lewin
Lead inspector