

St Patrick's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Langley Moor

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114268
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	311540
Inspection date	28 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Joseph Clark

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	78
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Kevin Coad
Headteacher	Mrs Pauline Burnside (Acting Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2003
School address	Goatbeck Terrace Langley Moor Durham County Durham DH7 8JJ
Telephone number	0191 3780552
Fax number	0

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the impact of major changes in staffing on standards, achievement, teaching and learning; the impact of new leadership in setting a clear direction for improvement; and how effectively pupils' spiritual development is promoted. 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.

Description of the school

St Patrick's is much smaller than most primary schools. Children who join the school in the Reception year have usually attended a local nursery. Their levels of development on entry fluctuate but are generally typical for their age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. Most children are from White British backgrounds. A small minority of pupils speak English as an additional language and, of these, a few are at an early stage of learning English. Pupils come from an even mix of advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds. During the past two terms there has been significant disruption to the teaching force, including the long term absence of the headteacher. Most teachers, some of whom are newly qualified, are new to the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Patrick's provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. The standards pupils reach at the end of Key Stage 2 are broadly average and their achievement is satisfactory. There are some good and outstanding features in much of what the school provides but unforeseen disruption to the teaching force, due to events beyond its control, have had a negative impact on pupils' progress.

The leadership and management of the school have been successful in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which is good. Pupils' spiritual development is outstanding, reflecting the school's strong Christian commitment to personal values. They respect their teachers and each other. They mix easily and confidently together, not only with pupils of the same age, but with other ages as well and look out for each other. Their behaviour and attitudes are excellent. Pupils say that there is no bullying or intimidation and if there were, their teachers and other adults are all approachable and accessible. They are polite and courteous to visitors. They attend regularly, enjoy their lessons and appreciate the opportunities the school provides for them to exercise responsibility, for example as prefects or house captains. They know about the importance of keeping safe and adopting a healthy lifestyle. They appreciate the good care the school takes of them, ensuring their safety through full compliance with all the relevant legislation, for example, with regard to safeguarding. Year 6 pupils are prepared well for the next stage in their learning.

The impact of this good provision for personal development can be seen in pupils' attitudes in the classroom. They are eager to learn and cooperate fully with their teachers. They have coped admirably with the recent disruption in staffing and timetables. Teaching is satisfactory. Most teachers are very recent appointments. They are settling in well, getting to know their pupils and what each one is capable of. They are carefully planning well-structured lessons to interest and motivate pupils. They have established positive and trusting relationships. There is not yet the level of challenge in the teaching to ensure all groups of pupils achieve as well as they can. This is because in mixed-age classes teachers do not yet have a clear view of what each pupil is capable of and can achieve. There is some good teaching but this is not yet consistent throughout the school.

Pupils' progress and achievement are satisfactory. In the national tests for Year 6, taken in May 2007, the school's results dipped to a point lower than in previous years. The results in English and science were broadly average; in mathematics, they were above average. Given their starting points, pupils' achievement was satisfactory. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children at the early stage of learning English are well supported and make the same satisfactory progress as other groups of pupils. In English, standards in writing are not as well developed as in other aspects of literacy. Overall, the curriculum meets the needs of learners well. Since September, there has been a significant increase in the range of extra-curricular activities provided. Curricular planning to ensure pupils learn more about other cultures is being developed satisfactorily. These are just two of the improvements for which the new leadership team has been responsible.

Parents are full of praise for other improvements they have seen in recent months, particularly in much better communication with them as parents. Their responses to the Ofsted questionnaire indicate overwhelming support for the school. As one parent put it, 'Since the new leadership team took charge, the school feels invigorated ... and an altogether more go-ahead attitude

instilled'. New systems for setting targets have been introduced to help pupils improve their academic standards. These new systems are not yet fully embedded and their use across the school is inconsistent. Academic targets at the end of Year 6 are very challenging. For the first time, they were not met in 2007 in either English or mathematics.

The acting headteacher, effectively supported by an associate headteacher, has managed turbulence in staffing sensitively but decisively. Leadership is energetic and purposeful. The roles of subject coordinators have been put on hold until permanent appointments can be made. In the meantime, senior leaders are working on subject developments and improvements in teaching and learning with the involvement and cooperation of the whole staff group. New systems of monitoring and evaluation are leading to a clear sense of purpose and direction, with specific focus on the attainment of higher standards and greater achievement. Through this monitoring, managers know where the strengths are and what needs to be developed further. This is resulting in accurate self-evaluation and effective plans for securing improvement. Consequently, there is good capacity for the school to improve further. Governors are tackling the staffing problems with a sense of purpose. They have good curricular and pastoral links with the school and support it well. New teachers are being well supported and are settling in very successfully.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage. When they enter the school their knowledge and skills are typical for their age but the overall picture fluctuates from year-to-year. They settle in well. They enjoy their learning and work and play enthusiastically. Their individual needs are quickly identified and a curriculum designed to respond to individual need motivates and supports their learning. There is a good mix of activities; some directed by teachers and other to allow children to explore for themselves. Planning to provide a range of stimulating activities to help children learn is good. The new outdoor play facilities are used effectively for role play and exploration. Teaching is good and the quality of adult support is very effective. Children make good progress and when they leave the Foundation Stage they are generally achieving levels expected for their age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by focusing teaching more on challenging all groups of pupils to make good progress.
- Ensure that assessment and target setting are used to identify individual pupils' needs as a means of raising standards.

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.

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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	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	3

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	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	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?	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?	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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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	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

30 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Patrick's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Langley Moor,
Durham, DH7 8JJ

Thank you so much for your warm welcome when I visited your school recently. I really appreciated the help you gave me and the interesting things you told me about your school. I enjoyed your Celebration Mass and was impressed with how clearly you spoke up. The parishioners I spoke to afterwards thought you are all wonderful children.

These are the main findings of my inspection:

- you are making satisfactory progress in your work
- the standards you reach at the end of Year 6 are as good as those achieved in the majority of primary schools but your writing skills could be better
- the school is doing a brilliant job in helping you become sensitive, caring and thoughtful children with a strong spiritual awareness
- you enjoy coming to school where your excellent attitudes and behaviour are a real help to your teachers, most of whom are new to the school
- your new teachers are settling in well and teaching is satisfactory overall; often it is good but it could be more challenging for some of you
- setting targets to help you improve your standards of work in all subjects is not well established
- your teachers and other adults take good care of you
- your attendance is usually well above average but slipped last year due to so many of you taking holidays in term time
- you told me you like the new opportunities to take part in activities outside of normal lessons.

As a result of the inspection, I have asked the school to help you to firstly improve your standards of writing and secondly, to set you individual targets as a means of helping you improve your standards of work.

In the meantime, continue to work hard and do your best – and try not to take so many holidays in term time! Thank you once again for all your help. Good luck in the future.

Best wishes

Joe Clark

Lead inspector