

St Patrick's Roman Catholic Primary School, Rochdale

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105827
Local Authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	324280
Inspection date	15 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Sarah Drake

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	295
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sheila McNally
Headteacher	Mr Brendan Duffy
Date of previous school inspection	14 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Foxholes Road Rochdale Lancashire OL12 0ET
Telephone number	01706 648089

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	15 October 2008
Inspection number	324280

Fax number

01706 357876

Age group	4-11
Inspection date	15 October 2008
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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 the following issues: the standards and achievement of pupils, with particular attention to progress in Key Stage 1; the quality of provision and children's achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS); the impact of the leadership and management's monitoring and evaluation on school improvement. Evidence was gathered from: national published assessment data; the school's self-evaluation, assessment records, policies and minutes; observation of the school at work; discussions with members of staff, pupils, parents and governors; the questionnaires returned by parents. 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 this report.

Description of the school

This large, popular school has grown in size since the last inspection. Its pupils come from a diverse range of backgrounds, with some experiencing significant disadvantage. The majority of pupils are White British. The proportion from minority ethnic heritages has increased significantly over the past five years and is now broadly average. Pupils who speak English as an additional language come from 12 different countries, and a small number are refugees or asylum seekers. Broadly average numbers of pupils are eligible to receive free school meals. The proportion that has learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly below average but there are big variations between year groups. Children join the EYFS with a wide range of pre-school experience.

Since 2004, the school has played the lead role in the Rochdale RC Federation of Schools. It holds many awards including the I CAN Early Talk Accreditation, Healthy Schools, Eco-Schools Silver, and Basic Skills Quality Mark. It has Extended School status and runs a before- and after-school club.

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 provides its pupils with an excellent education that helps them to achieve highly both academically and in their personal development. Children's skills on entry to Reception are generally below those expected for their age. By the end of Year 6, in response to first-rate teaching, an exciting curriculum with lots of extra activities and, above all, the exceptional care offered by all staff, pupils consistently reach well above average standards. The moving force behind the school's success is the inspirational leadership of the headteacher and associate headteacher. Their humanity, high expectations, attention to detail and analytical skills ensure that the school goes from strength to strength academically without losing the all-important personal touch. No wonder that parents and pupils use words such as, 'excellent, brilliant and fantastic', to describe St Patrick's.

Published data indicate that standards at Key Stage 1 have slowly declined over the past three years, with a slight lift in 2007. While overall standards have declined, it is clear that all groups of pupils make at least good progress in Years 1 and 2. By Year 6, pupils of all ethnicities and first languages reach well above average standards in all tested subjects. Boys achieve significantly higher than boys nationally and reach similar standards to girls. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make exceptional progress alongside other pupils. Inspection evidence shows that standards have risen impressively over the past year.

The school's very close monitoring and analysis of pupils' progress, which leads to regular changes of grouping, extra provision and additional challenge, underpins its success. For example, one response to identified weaknesses in Key Stage 1 pupils' vocabulary has been to run early morning sessions introducing the language that will feature in the following lessons of the day. This innovative approach ensures that everyone can contribute fully in whole-group sessions. For example, all pupils gleefully used their observational skills and engaged in discussion with their partners in lessons during which teachers used virtual binoculars on the interactive whiteboard to seek out woodland animals, as an inspiration for pupils' writing. This also demonstrates the imaginative way in which the school plans links between subjects that help pupils make sense of their learning and want to find out more. Key Stage 2 pupils' current Splish, Splosh, Splash topic includes writing about the water cycle, analysing a newspaper report on the Rochdale Flood of 1927, and considering the adaptations animals need to live in water or the desert. Highly skilled teaching assistants provide invaluable support throughout the school. Teachers plan very carefully to meet pupils' different needs and provide them with well judged challenge or support. They mark their work regularly according to the learning objective of the lesson but do not always make clear enough to pupils the next steps they need to take to improve.

Pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development means that this is a school in which excellent relationships abound. Older pupils consider it great fun to serve the youngest ones with their dinner and then lead playground games for them afterwards. It is natural for pupils to consider others' needs and offer them help. The school council plays a strong role and the eco group ensures that everyone is aware of the need to recycle and to save water. Pupils have a very good awareness of how to stay safe and healthy; they thoroughly enjoy the early morning Take Ten sessions when, 'You get to exercise your brain as well as your body.' Excellent behaviour, good attendance and levels of concentration, a willingness to use their initiative and confidence to express their thoughts all prepare pupils exceptionally well for future success. Multicultural days, charitable fundraising and opportunities to learn first-hand

from newcomers about their culture mean that pupils have a good awareness of their place in the local and wider community.

A shared philosophy that every child really does matter and can achieve highly is the glittering thread that runs throughout the school. Due to excellent, rigorous leadership at all levels including governors, all staff feel valued and fulfil their responsibilities to a high standard. Staff provide excellent role models for pupils and for newly arrived staff. Highly organised and clearly explained procedures and practices underpin the razor sharp sense of direction that leads to improvement. This solid, albeit regularly reviewed and adapted, framework ensures consistency of approach and provides the bedrock on which the school's exemplary care, guidance and support for pupils is founded. Thoughtful induction and transition procedures mean that pupils move seamlessly through their education. Knowledge of and support for individual needs extend way beyond the school day, with the high quality out-of-school club making a strong contribution. Pupils are absolutely clear about what is expected of them and are given the skills to fulfil or exceed those expectations. The school has made great progress since the last inspection and has excellent capacity to improve even further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Excellent leadership of the EYFS means that it provides the children with an outstanding introduction to formal education. Most children join the EYFS with particular weaknesses in their communication and mathematical skills; a few also have poor social skills. By the end of the year far more children than nationally reach the expected skill levels for their age and in communication, mathematical and personal development an impressive proportion exceed these. Excellent induction procedures and close working with parents help children to settle swiftly and make rapid progress. The classrooms, the outside area and the structure of the day are all thoughtfully organised to promote all areas of learning at an optimum level. This means that children are never at a loss for something to do and anything that they choose extends their knowledge, skills and understanding. Staff carefully observe individuals' progress and skilfully engage children in conversation. This prompts them to think about what they are doing and about the impact of their actions whether on other people or, for example, when making a water jug overflow. Staff's observations also lead to early diagnosis and support for individuals' needs. Young children are equally well catered for in the out-of-school club where staff and older pupils ensure that they are fully included in all the fun.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers' marking makes clear to pupils how they can improve their work.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

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/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of St Patrick's Roman Catholic Primary School, Rochdale, Rochdale, OL12 0ET

Thank you for being so friendly, polite and helpful when I visited your school recently. The warm welcome given to me by you and the staff meant my time was very enjoyable. You told me that your school is, 'fun, caring, exciting and the best'. I agree with you and your parents that it is outstanding in every way.

One of the main reasons that St Patrick's is such a good school is that it has exceptionally good leaders. Your headteacher and associate headteacher are extremely skilled at reflecting on its strengths and any weaker areas, and then planning actions that ensure it is always improving. They also give the other staff lots of encouragement to take on responsibilities and help them to gain the skills to fulfil their roles really well. This is exactly what all staff do for you, too. They provide you with the outstanding care, support and high quality teaching that help you to make excellent progress in your learning and achieve well above average standards by the end of Year 6. The clear guidance that they give you about how to behave in a way that helps everyone to be happy and feel secure means that you are a pleasure to meet. You take really good care of each other, the environment and people further afield who are less fortunate than you. It is also great to see how well pupils from different backgrounds get on together and show interest in each other's cultures. Children in the Reception classes have a really good start to their education because, as with everything else in the school, staff think hard about how to organise their days so that they can have as much fun as possible while learning new things.

Your school keeps improving all the time because staff are never complacent but always challenge themselves, like they challenge you, to do better. One thing I think could be a bit better is the way that teachers mark your work. Some of them give you really clear advice about how to improve it but, through looking at your books and talking with pupils at lunchtime, I know that this is not yet the case in every classroom.

I do hope that you continue to enjoy learning as much as you do now.