

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112340
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	325585
Inspection date	20 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Jim Bennetts

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)	175
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	Mr Paul Glaister
Headteacher	Mrs Pauline Conway
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Derwent Street Workington Cumbria CA14 2DW
Telephone number	01900 325237

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	20 November 2008
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Fax number

01900 325099

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- pupils' achievement and standards;
- the provision in lessons for pupils of different abilities;
- plans for the consolidation of leadership and management.

Gathering evidence from: the school's documentation, assessment systems and national test results; discussions with staff, governors, and the local authority; parents' and pupils' views; and lesson observations.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. On some points, there was sufficient inspection evidence to suggest that the school had been over cautious in its evaluation. Grades included in this report on areas that were not inspected in detail have been agreed with the school.

Description of the school

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School is smaller than average in size. Each year group, including the Reception class, is in a separate classroom. It is close to the centre of Workington on the Cumbria coast. The majority of pupils live close to the school, but about a third of them are from further afield. The great majority of pupils are of White British background. In the last few years some pupils have joined the school from abroad, particularly from Poland. The school welcomes pupils from non-Catholic families. The number of pupils joining the school at other than the normal times is higher than usual. Fewer pupils than average are entitled to free meals. There are fewer pupils than normal with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but more than usual have a statement of special educational needs. Many pupils who join the Reception class have attended a nursery elsewhere.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. It has the overwhelming support of parents. A parent comments: 'The school has been fantastic...a real commitment to the needs of the children, not just the educational needs'. Considerable improvements have been made in every aspect of its work since the last inspection.

Standards are above average and achievement is good. Progress in personal development is excellent. A parent comments: 'My children have come on by leaps and bounds'. In the past, pupils joining in Reception have had skills that were at least as good as is typical for their age. In recent years, attainment has been lower, with some weaknesses evident in communication skills. Pupils make good progress in Reception. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards are generally a little above those found nationally. In 2007 and in the provisional 2008 test results, standards at the end of Key Stage 2 were well above average. This shows very good achievement. There is some strong achievement evident in Years 3 to 6 at present, including for those pupils who have learnt English as an additional language, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. When the present Year 6 were young children, their standards were lower than those who left the school in 2008, consequently current standards are not as high as with that year group.

Pupils greatly enjoy school. They told inspectors: 'It's brilliant'; 'The teachers are great'. A parent says: 'My child is excited about coming to school and loves every minute'. This enjoyment is reflected in exemplary attitudes, high attendance and excellent behaviour. Pupils are helpful and caring towards one another both in and outside school. They feel safe, they trust staff and know exactly what to do to keep safe. They are enthusiastic about sensible diet and exercise to keep healthy. There have been no incidents involving bullying or racism. Pupils take on responsibilities readily, for example, in Reception, where children become VIPs for a day and help with jobs such as feeding the fish. Pupils appreciate opportunities to have their say in how things are done in the school. Spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. Cultural development is good. The school fosters community cohesion well within the local community and is vigorous in fund raising for charities, but pupils' awareness of the variety of cultures in modern Britain is limited. Pupils have good opportunities to develop enterprise skills and they are well prepared to move on to later stages of education.

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school and senior staff have been shrewd in deploying staff so that the good quality of provision is maintained despite unavoidable changes in staffing. Exemplary attitudes contribute strongly to very effective learning. Teachers make lessons interesting. This was particularly so when Year 5 worked through a Victorian school day, and with literacy in Year 6 which developed from pupils' research on the life of a writer of popular books for children. Pace is usually brisk and success criteria are made clear. There is usually different work set for different ability groups, though occasionally expectations set for a group of pupils within a class are a little too low. Sometimes opportunities are missed to correct slips, misconceptions and muddled working as they arise.

The vibrant curriculum meets all requirements. Visits, visitors and special events add excitement. Pupils learn French. In Year 5 they confidently greeted an inspector in Italian. Pupils value the sporting and other activities that are made available out of school time. They speak highly of the residential trip and other opportunities to learn away from the school site.

Committed teachers and other staff provide excellent care for pupils. Procedures for child protection and safeguarding pupils' welfare meet all requirements. The warm and caring environment is greatly valued by parents. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported and they make the progress they are capable of. Guidance to pupils on how to improve work has become much stronger since the last inspection, though occasionally mistakes and muddles arising in lessons are not attended to as deftly as they might be. Reliable assessment of pupils' standards term by term provides a record of progress which identifies any signs of underachievement at an early stage. Straightforward, short-term targets are set for pupils and these focus their efforts productively. Booster classes and other interventions correct any weaknesses effectively.

The school is well led and managed. It's self-evaluation is exceptionally thorough and candid; senior staff and governors have a very clear grasp of how things stand – their expectations are high. Despite financial strictures due to the school's small size, the allocation of resources and deployment of staff to best effect has been highly successful. The school is vigilant in ensuring that pupils of all backgrounds get the best of opportunities. The senior team at present has strong capacity for ongoing improvement. There are, however, significant changes in prospect at the end of the current term that affect the composition of the senior team. With appropriate action planned to take account of changes in the future, the school is well placed to sustain its improvements and take them further. Several key governors are new to their position; nonetheless, governors are closely in touch with developments in the school and support it well.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

In every possible way, children make good headway in the Reception class. Good relationships with parents help children to settle quickly; a parent says: 'He truly enjoys school; really making good progress'. Children's personal development is outstanding and they are exceptionally well cared for by staff: care and welfare have a high priority. When the children start school, they are achieving below the levels expected for their age across all areas of learning. Good teaching ensures they make good progress. They have suitable opportunities to work independently as well as in activities led by the teacher. By the time they begin Year 1, the majority of children are achieving broadly in line with the national expectations for their age, and in some areas above. Assessment is exemplary. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led with enthusiasm and dedication. Many improvements have been made, for instance, with provision in clear learning zones and the development of outdoor facilities. A thorough action plan sets out intentions and aspirations for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Refine teaching so that all groups within each class have appropriate challenge, and so that slips and misconceptions are corrected as they arise.
- Consolidate strengths evident in leadership and management at present, to ensure that the school continues to be well led and managed in the future.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
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?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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	1
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 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?	1

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	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	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**

21 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Cumbria, CA14 2DW

Thank you for the help that you gave us when Mrs Martin and I inspected your school recently. We were impressed by how well you get on with one another and how keen you are to learn.

We think St Patrick's is a good school and that some of the things it does are outstanding. Pupils learn well throughout the school and standards by the end of Year 6 have been above average for the last two years. You have good lessons and teachers make some of them really interesting; Year 5 greatly enjoyed being 'Victorians' for a day. As you grow up you are learning how to look after yourselves well and your behaviour is excellent. You are very considerate and helpful to one another and you talk to visitors with confidence and maturity. The school does everything it can to look after you and to make sure you are all doing well. The school is well run. In any school, there are changes in staff. There have been new teachers recently in some classrooms. As you know, there will be a little more change next term. The governors and headteacher have effective plans to make sure that you have the best possible teaching and that the school continues to be well managed.

We have asked the school to do just two things. One is about lessons. Though lessons are good and sometimes outstanding, occasionally one group in a classroom has work that it is not quite as hard as it could be, meanwhile, occasionally the slips you make with spelling or sums could be spotted and sorted out a little more effectively. The other is about arrangements for running the school. With the changes that are going on this year, senior staff and governors will need to keep checking that everything continues to work well.

Keep on working hard. You have a really good school: a school to be proud of. We wish you every success in the future.

Jim Bennetts

Lead inspector