

St Pius X Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112365
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	325590
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael Onyon

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)	201
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 Chris Salmon
Headteacher	Mrs Patricia Tumelty
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	Schneider Road Barrow-in-Furness Cumbria LA14 4AA
Telephone number	01229 894651
Fax number	01229 894652

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a school of below average size that serves an area of social and economic deprivation. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. A smaller than average proportion of pupils is identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; with an average number of statements of special educational need. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) consists of one class of Reception children. The school has Healthy Schools status and the Activemark and Artsmark awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Pius X Primary is a good school which enjoys the overwhelming support of parents, carers and the community. They appreciate the excellent pastoral care and support their children receive. It is a lively learning community where pupils feel very safe and secure in the knowledge that they are known well by all the adults. Pupils enjoy coming to school, they like their teachers and find lessons 'interesting and fun'. The leadership team, staff and governors are committed to a clear vision to continue to improve practice and raise standards so that all pupils can achieve their best.

From starting points below those expected when children enter the Reception class they make good progress. This is built on well in Key Stage 1. Standards by the end of Year 2 are average in reading, writing and mathematics, with particularly high levels in reading. Good teaching provides pupils with this firm foundation for learning, thus aiding their readiness for the further development of basic skills at Key Stage 2. The pace of pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 has quickened over the last year as they gain steadily in confidence and independence. By the end of Year 6, pupils achieve well. Standards are average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils do best in writing and least well in solving numerical problems, where initiatives to improve standards are at an early stage. The school provides well for pupils' additional learning needs and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress alongside their classmates.

The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' all-round development. It is focused successfully on promoting pupils' readiness to learn, on improving their basic skills and successfully offers opportunities to use the skills in other subjects, for example, modern foreign languages; recently celebrating a 'European Day of Languages'. The school's work in teaching languages is rightly recognised as a strength. A good variety of enrichment, including theme weeks, is popular with pupils. Teaching is good. Teachers manage pupils well and establish strong, positive relationships with them. Consequently, pupils are responsive and try hard to concentrate and persevere in their work. Pastoral care and welfare arrangements, to meet the diverse range of pupils' needs and to ensure their well-being, are of excellent quality and this promotes pupils' positive attitudes well. The school's systems for tracking pupils' progress and identifying pupils who would benefit from extra help are effective in supporting their learning, particularly for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The school benefits from good quality leadership and management. The headteacher recognises the talents and abilities of her staff and actively engages them in effectively monitoring and evaluating the school's performance. As a result, the school is improving. Middle leaders have acquired the experience to take actions to raise standards in their subjects. The school's improvement plan does not sufficiently pinpoint precise academic standards and achievement as goals over a given period of time and so it is difficult for the school to measure progress and gauge its success. Governors hold the school to account well and have a good understanding of strengths and areas to improve. The school provides good value for money. Progress has been sustained since the previous inspection and the school is well placed to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The arrangements made for children in the EYFS are good. The Reception class is well managed and a suitable learning environment has been created, in which children feel confident and secure. They are well looked after and staff are quick to respond to their needs and monitor their progress well. Gentle prompting and encouragement are very much in evidence during all activities. Teaching is good, with work, play and investigation well designed to stimulate children's interests. There is a good balance between adult-led and child-selected activities. Staff are deployed effectively to meet individual needs, especially in helping those who may struggle with their learning. Instructions are clear and rules are well explained, which helps the children to be sure what is expected of them. As a result, aspects of their personal development are very good, especially in their attitudes to learning and the way they get on with each other. Children enter the Reception class with skills that are lower than usually seen for this age and by the end of the year, their attainment is much closer to average. Particularly good progress is made in linking sounds and letters. All children are able to make accurate attempts at sounding out letters. Rapid improvement is also taking place in children's use of numbers for counting, with the more able successfully adding single units.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate the progress of pupils in mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- Ensure that school improvement planning has precise, challenging and measurable academic goals to raise achievement even further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are average and achievement is good. Pupils build well on their earlier attainment as they progress through the school. They make successful steps in their learning in Key Stage 1 and acquire the positive attitudes towards learning, which underpin their good progress. By the end of Year 2, standards are average in English, mathematics and science. Because of a higher than average number of pupils joining the school with low levels of attainment during Key Stage 2, results dipped in 2007. Current standards have improved and by the end of Year 6 are average in English, mathematics and science. The good progress made by pupils continues through Key Stage 2. A determined focus on writing has led to a significant improvement. The school has put in place measures to improve further pupils' standards in mathematics and whilst these are having a good impact on developing problem-solving skills the pace of progress is not as brisk as that in English and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress against clear targets in their individual education plans.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They are making good progress in considering their own lives and those of others. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. In particular, pupils enjoy referring to spiritual and moral issues in the Christmas story. Firm friendships are established and pupils negotiate with each other without the intervention of an adult. Pupils' behaviour is good. They respond positively to instructions and reminders. They have an excellent sense of how to conduct themselves safely, handling

equipment with care and moving about the school very sensibly. Pupils have a very good understanding of school rules. The youngest pupils are rapidly acquiring the same good habits as older pupils and readily offer advice about sharing and waiting your turn.

Pupils feel extremely safe at school. They know how to turn to staff to help them. Vulnerable pupils feel secure and will talk about how other pupils help them. They are aware of risks, for example, on their way to and from school pointing out to staff the frosty ground was potentially dangerous. Pupils know about healthy lifestyles and can talk about balanced diets. Pupils enjoy coming to school and, as a result, there are above average levels of attendance. They are punctual in arriving at lessons. There is good attendance at the wide range of lunchtime and after-school clubs. They know their community well and are developing a sense of how to be good citizens, for example, through the work of the school council. Pupils are developing well the independence and initiative they will need as they grow older.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers know pupils and their families well and this fosters good motivation and enjoyment of learning. Pupils are keen to respond and their self-esteem is boosted by the ready recognition of their efforts and encouragement from the staff. Teachers maintain an effective balance between leading pupils' learning and providing interesting activities to enable pupils to learn well independently. The outcomes of the tracking of progress are used well to effectively plan lessons, to ensure pupils understand the purpose of their learning and to cater for the needs of pupils of all abilities. Improvements in teaching since the previous inspection have contributed to consistent good teaching supporting good pupil achievement. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well by teaching assistants, whose contributions are well planned. Marking is of good quality and supports pupils' learning well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy the curriculum provided for them at school. 'I like everything I do' was a frequent response to questions about favourite subjects. Activities are usually well planned to take account of the range of abilities, including learners with difficulties and/or disabilities. Curriculum planning is precise in literacy, where the use of targets to address areas for improvement in pupils' learning is leading to more rapid progress. A similar approach has been started in numeracy, but is not so well developed. A good range of lunchtime and after-school activities is highly valued by pupils. They are keen to talk about their successes in these clubs and they like the fact that there is a good balance between active, sporting activities and more sedentary pursuits. The school has thought carefully about trips and visits, as well as encouraging visitors to the school, in order to maximise the opportunity for pupils to broaden their awareness. The consistent approach to supporting pupils' personal development is helping them to make good progress. They are encouraged to think about their own well-being as well as spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues which are beyond their own personal experiences. They are well prepared for the next stages in their lives.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall. Pastoral care and support are excellent; academic guidance is good. Pupils thrive and feel safe because strong Christian values nurture them to become confident and caring citizens. Parents' questionnaires overwhelmingly support this view; 'the staff are always supportive and listen to any problems we have. The school welcomes all children no matter what their capabilities.' Particularly through the Social and Emotional Resilience in Schools (SERIS) programme; skilled and experienced teaching assistants provide high quality support for the most vulnerable pupils. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet government requirements. Good systems are in place to track pupils' progress, quickly identify any underachievement and provide the most appropriate forms of challenge and support. Individual targets are set for English and mathematics and assessment and marking is helpful in guiding pupils towards areas for improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher guides colleagues by example, providing firm, well organised and highly effective leadership, with a sharp focus on raising standards. She is well supported by the deputy headteacher and they form a successful team. Community cohesion is good; there are strong and effective links with the local community and also with communities in other countries, for example through recognition as a Fairtrade school. Because good, detailed systems for monitoring the progress of pupils are in place leaders have a secure knowledge of priorities and understand well the strengths and weaknesses in standards reached by pupils. Whilst this is demonstrated in the school's accurate self-evaluation, academic targets are not expressed clearly in the school's improvement plan. Subject leaders are steadily acquiring a sharper overview of their subjects. Resources, including staff, are thoughtfully deployed to improve outcomes for pupils. Improvements in Key Stage 2 are reflected in the rise in pupils' academic standards and achievement. Leaders acknowledge, however, there is more work to be done to improve achievement, especially in mathematics. Governors are well informed about school development and provide good support and challenge to senior leaders.

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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?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
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	3
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?	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	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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?	2

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

10 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Pius X Catholic Primary School, Cumbria, LA14 4AA.

We thoroughly enjoyed the time we spent in your school. The warmth of your welcome, your courtesy and help were very much appreciated. We particularly enjoyed speaking with you and watching your Christmas concert. We mentioned that we would tell you about the main findings from the inspection.

We judged your school to be good. What we particularly liked about your school was:

- the excellent pastoral care and support; and the good guidance you are given to help you do well in your learning, and to be caring citizens
- the good start children get in Reception
- the good progress you make
- your good behaviour and attitudes that help to ensure that your school is a happy, safe and secure place to be
- the good teaching, learning and curriculum
- the hard and willing work you do to help and care for each other and make a very good contribution to the life of your school
- the good leadership and management that is appreciated by your parents.

To help make your school even better, we have asked it to look at ways of helping you to make progress in mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 2, as quickly as you do in English and science. The school has also been asked to include clear academic targets in the school's improvement plan.

We know that you will want to play a full part by continuing to follow your teachers' advice and guidance very closely.

Our very best wishes and good luck for the future.

Michael Onyon

Lead inspector