

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Corby

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122045
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	327629
Inspection dates	13–14 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Marion Wallace

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	236
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	16
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gerard Mallaghan
Headteacher	Chris Latimer
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2003
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Patrick Road Corby NN18 9NT
Telephone number	01536 744447
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Patrick's is a large primary school in Corby. Higher than average numbers of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The number of pupils who do not speak English as their first language has risen in the last few years to above average. St Patrick's is a Catholic school serving an almost predominantly Catholic community. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the numbers of pupils with a statement of special educational needs are average. There is Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision. Attainment on entry to the Nursery class is broadly as expected for children of this age but in recent years children have entered with weaker language and communication skills and knowledge and understanding of the world. The school has achieved the Healthy School award and Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Overall effectiveness is good. St Patrick's is a rapidly improving school where all pupils receive a good education and enjoy school tremendously. They have a very positive attitude to learning because the school is a well-led and extremely caring community that values and fully includes all pupils, encouraging them to achieve well. They learn to become part of, and contribute to, the school and wider community. The ethos is warm and supportive. Many parents agreed, commenting on the friendly and approachable staff and describing it as, 'a very good school where children develop confidence and learn to live with others'.

Pupils' achievement is good and enables them to reach standards that are above average by the time they leave school. A balance of good teaching and well-planned activities ensures Nursery and Reception children make good gains in their learning. Pupils continue to make good progress as they move through the school. By the time pupils leave the school in Year 6, they attain above average standards in English, mathematics and science, at both the expected level and the higher level. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make the same good progress as their peers.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good, reflecting high quality care, guidance and support. All pupils say they feel extremely safe and that they are confident that adults will deal with any problems swiftly. Pupils gain a good knowledge of how to adopt healthy lifestyles and have an enthusiastic and positive attitude to the many sporting activities on offer.

Preparation for adult life is good, with pupils developing competent skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT). They build on this further through the good opportunities to develop social skills and a sense of responsibility to the school and wider community.

Teaching is good and this contributes to the consistent gains in learning. In all classes, support staff work closely with class teachers to ensure that the quality of learning is good. Teachers are starting to plan lessons with tasks matched to the different pupil abilities but this is not yet consistent throughout the school, especially for more able pupils. There are effective systems in place to check on how well pupils are doing; any dips are swiftly identified, and intervention strategies put in place. The curriculum is good and offers a broad range of learning experiences but links between subjects are less well developed. The school works extremely well with others to promote learners' well-being. Care, guidance and support are good.

The greatest strength of this good school is the very high quality of leadership and management from the headteacher and senior teachers. Led by a strong and capable headteacher, leaders share passionately his vision for continual improvement and consistency throughout the school with sustained high achievement and standards. Governors are supportive but do not yet sufficiently challenge the school. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and has good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision for EYFS children has improved dramatically in the last few years and is now good. Increased opportunities for learning outdoors ensure all children receive a good balance of indoor and outdoor activities. Clear expectations and a well-planned curriculum are contributing to the good progress children in the Nursery and Reception class make in all areas of learning.

Activities are fun. Nursery children enjoy caring for the hens and Reception children enthusiastically learn about living things through their observations of the snail family. Planning, however, does not always identify tasks for children of different ability and consequently, more able children are not always fully challenged. By the time they enter Year 1, all children are reaching the expected goals and an increasing number are exceeding them. Adults use questions effectively to extend learning, which helps to give children confidence and plenty of opportunity to respond and communicate with others. There is a good balance between children selecting their own activities and adults directing activities. Relationships are very good and consequently children make good progress in their personal development. Welfare of children is outstanding and all aspects of care are rigorously attended to. Leadership and management are good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure teachers plan tasks that consistently challenge all groups of pupils, especially the more able.
- Adapt and improve the curriculum to embrace greater linking of subjects and consolidation of provision.
- Ensure governors develop their skills so that they contribute more fully to the school's self-evaluation and they can more rigorously challenge the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The school successfully enables all groups of pupils to achieve well. Inspection evidence and school data shows clearly that the number of pupils on course to reach the expected and higher levels continues to improve by the time pupils leave the school. In 2007 and 2008 (provisional data), all pupils in Year 6 reached the expected levels in English, mathematics and science and the majority reached the higher levels. Rigorous assessment and tracking, swiftly followed by successful intervention at all levels, are contributing to this good achievement. All pupils in Year 6 met their targets. The achievement of pupils at Key Stage 1 is not as consistent as in Key Stage 2. In the 2007 national tests, Year 2 pupils reached standards above average in reading, writing and mathematics but they dipped to broadly average in 2008 and not all pupils met their targets. Effective monitoring, extra support and additional challenge are ensuring that the current Year 2 are on course to meet their targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils make good gains in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in their very positive attitudes and excellent behaviour in class and around the school. They show care and consideration for others. As a result, relationships are very good and actively support learning. The very strong relationships and respect help the moral development of pupils, which is outstanding. Pupils' understanding of life in a multicultural society and other faiths although good, is less well developed. They are encouraged to lead a healthy lifestyle, they are aware of healthy eating and they enjoy physical activity and daily 'Activate' sessions. The uptake of school lunch at 'Paddy and Polly's Diner' has improved as pupils learn to appreciate a nutritious meal. The school council and older pupils fulfil their responsibilities well and they contribute strongly to the cooperative spirit of the school community. Attendance has risen dramatically over the past two years. It is now average and the school is working successfully to improve and reward better attendance.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils benefit from good teaching as they progress through the school. Teachers are well organised and most lessons proceed at a brisk pace. They communicate learning enthusiastically and consequently, this is reflected in the pupils' positive response. Well-targeted support is also making a significant contribution to the quality of pupils' learning. Planning is good but does not always take account of pupils' different abilities. There are missed opportunities to plan challenging work for the more able pupils. Teachers use questions and a range of methods such as 'Talking partners' well to involve pupils in their own learning. In all lessons, pupils evaluate their own learning. The staff know and track pupils' progress well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or those pupils who speak English as a second language make the same good gains as their peers because of the effective and well-planned support they receive.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

An interesting curriculum ensures that pupils enjoy their learning. Planning is detailed and ensures continuity in learning. The needs of pupils with identified learning difficulties and pupils who speak English as an additional language are well met, with good individual and group support. Plans to develop greater links between the subjects, to consolidate and extend learning, are at an early stage of development. The use of ICT, literacy and numeracy to enhance learning in other subjects is satisfactory. The personal, social and health education contributes to the strong, caring ethos of the school. The range of clubs and their impact on pupils' learning and enjoyment of school is outstanding. A good range of visits and visitors, such as the trip to Paris, enrich the provision.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff are very concerned for the children's well-being and they take good action to safeguard them. Good links with parents help to make sure pupils are happy and settled in their learning. Children settle well in the Nursery and Reception, and their self-confidence is encouraged by high quality care and support. The needs of vulnerable pupils are well understood and an excellent range of support is in place to promote their personal and academic development. A 'drop in' session organised by the learning mentor enhances this provision.

Staff check the progress of pupils carefully and know whether pupils from different groups are making the same rate of progress. The quality of marking is consistently good and informs pupils clearly what they have to do to improve. New procedures are in place to enable pupils to know their own targets but pupils are not yet certain of the next steps to take them forward in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher leads the school extremely well and has the confidence and respect of pupils, staff, parents and the local community. Parents agree; one parent, reflecting the views of many said, 'The headteacher is wonderful and has changed this school for the better, it improves daily.' Leaders and managers set a clear direction which is leading to impressive improvement and the promotion of high quality care and education. Improvement, however, is not yet consistent, for example in the standards reached at Key Stage 1. The role of subject leaders has developed significantly since the last inspection. Staff contribute very effectively to the well-considered plans for the next stage of the school's development, which are informed by a rigorous review of all aspects of the school's work. The school's ability to evaluate its own provision is excellent. Staff track and monitor pupils' progress and check the outcomes of the provision. As a result, an analysis of current progress and attainment has led to increased intervention for some pupils. These pupils receive additional support and are now making good gains in their learning. Community cohesion is good. The governing body has a new leader and has recently changed its organisation and it does not yet fully challenge the school.

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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?	1
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?	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?	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	1
The attendance of learners	3
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?	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	1
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	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	3
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**

17 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Corby NN18 9NT

Thank you all very much for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed talking with you and your teachers. It was good to see how enthusiastic you were to raise money for the Children in Need charity appeal, and we hope you raised lots. You told us that St Patrick's is a good and improving school and we agree with you. These are the things we found that your school does well.

- You get off to a good start in Nursery and Reception and continue to make good progress through the school. As a result, you reach above average standards by the end of Year 6.
- You all enjoy learning very much and work hard because teaching is good.
- You make good progress in your personal development. Your behaviour is excellent. You concentrate really well and do your best. You are sensible and caring to others and you are extremely aware of safety aspects.
- You enjoy and benefit from the extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors.
- Your school cares about you very much and teaches you a lot about how to be healthy and care for others.
- Your school council is a well-organised group and is working well to make sure that you all get a say in how to improve your school.
- Your headteacher and senior teachers lead the school extremely well and all the staff work effectively together to make sure that the school is an exciting place. They constantly try to make it even better. They check your progress carefully and extra help is given to those who need it. What we have asked your school to do now:
 - ensure teachers plan tasks that consistently challenge all groups of pupils, especially those who find the work easy
 - improve the curriculum so that you learn to make more links between subjects
 - ensure governors develop their skills so that they can challenge the school and check how well you are all learning.

You can help by continuing to work really hard. Thank you for a very enjoyable and memorable visit to your school and best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Marion Wallace Lead inspector