

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124362
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	328119
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Brian Holmes

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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	193
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	Joan McKinlay
Headteacher	Ann Goodison
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Marston Road Stafford ST16 3BT
Telephone number	01785 356685

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2009
Inspection number	328119

Fax number

01785 356 689

Age group 4-11

Inspection dates 5-6 May 2009

Inspection number 328119

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

St. Patrick's is a smaller than average Catholic primary school, with close links to the local church. It has an Early Years Foundation Stage for Reception-aged children. Most pupils are from White British families, although the number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, and for whom English is an additional language, has increased since the previous inspection. The proportion of learners with difficulties and/or disabilities, including pupils with statements of special educational needs, has also increased since the previous inspection and is above average. The school has gained the Active Mark and Dyslexia Friendly Status, Level 1. The school has childcare provision that is not managed by the governing body and was inspected separately.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school provides a good education. The headteacher and senior staff set a clear direction for the school for all pupils to achieve well in both their learning and personal development. This follows a period when there were significant staff changes which affected the learning and progress of some pupils. Staff and governors are equally committed to ensuring that the school motto, 'Love, learn and respect' is put into practice. Good levels of care and support based on the school ethos of respect have a positive effect on pupils' personal development and well-being. Both parents and pupils are very supportive of the school. One pupil said, typically, 'The school is a cheerful and colourful place where everyone gets on.' Several parents commented on the 'friendly atmosphere' around the school and its 'caring ethos'.

From the good start they make in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils achieve well and reach standards which are above average by the end of Year 6. Standards are consistently good in English and mathematics, and the current Year 6 are on track to maintain the improvement in results in recent years, including the good number of more able pupils who are reaching levels higher than those normally expected. The school has introduced a number of initiatives to improve the effectiveness of the curriculum in improving achievement, for example for children moving from Reception to Year 1 and for writing, which are clearly having a positive effect on pupils' achievement. Improved procedures for checking pupils' progress and for identifying pupils who need to improve have also had a positive effect. Senior staff are providing a good example to other less experienced staff in their roles as subject leaders, to raise standards of attainment. A good quality of teaching which engages pupils through interesting activities where they find out for themselves creates a vibrant learning environment. Pupils know their learning targets and this helps them to know what to do to improve their work. The curriculum is broad and balanced but not all pupils have opportunities to use their reading, writing and mathematical skills in all their subjects. Engagement with other communities beyond the local area, for example, in other towns and in other countries, is underdeveloped.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and their enjoyment of school is seen in their good behaviour. There is mutual respect between pupils and all the adults in school which result in strong relationships. Pupils know that their views are listened to. They demonstrate a good understanding of how to live healthily, as seen in their good support for the additional sports activities at lunchtime and after school, and they know how to stay safe. Their support for one another was seen in the care that older pupils show towards younger pupils in their role as peer mediators. Pupils make a good contribution to the life of the school and the community through the work of the school council and the work they do to support community events, such as singing in the town centre and visiting older people. The school council were involved in deciding to provide more play equipment for pupils at break and lunchtimes. Pupils' preparation for their future economic well-being is good because of their good achievement and the good opportunities they have to work together.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children join the school with skills and abilities below those expected, especially in their personal, social and emotional development. Through good learning and development and welfare provision they make good progress. Most children in Reception are on track to reach average standards by the time they

enter Year 1. There is good leadership and management. The teacher in charge has a clear vision for improving the provision further and she works well with the team of staff who are committed to meeting the needs of all children. They are rigorous in ensuring that children are safe and have a keen awareness of their emotional and physical needs. At times, children's behaviour is exemplary and they enjoy good relationships with each other and the adults around them. The school has worked hard to build very good relationships with parents, who are pleased with the quality of education that their children receive. One typically commented, 'My child enjoys school and her behaviour and development have improved greatly.'

Children settle easily and quickly become involved in their learning. They show high levels of independence and confidence in choosing activities. Good planning ensures that there is a wide range of activities which children find exciting and enjoyable, for example the 'Bob the Builder Peat Pit' where children explained they were building a 'statchoo'. On occasion, adult-led sessions are not stimulating enough to engage all children, who are distracted by the other activities going on around them. Assessment information is used well to record how well children have done each day and to plan the next steps in their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give pupils more opportunities, through the 'Creative Curriculum', to apply their reading, writing and mathematical skills in all their subjects.
- Ensure that pupils are provided with opportunities to engage with communities beyond the local community in order to promote their understanding of the United Kingdom community and beyond.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Most pupils make good progress and reach standards which are above average by the end of Year 6. They make good progress across the school because of effective teaching and learning which is addressing weaknesses in prior learning due to staffing changes. Standards are consistently good in reading, writing, mathematics and science, including for more able pupils. Recent initiatives to improve achievement for boys and in writing have worked well so that in most classes, pupils make good progress in most aspects of their learning. Other important factors in raising pupils' achievement have been the improved use of assessment information to check pupils' performance and the clear understanding most pupils have of their learning targets and what they need to do to achieve them. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress and achieve well because of the good levels of support they receive for their learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are given good opportunities in assemblies to reflect, and a weekly mass contributes strongly towards their spiritual development. Their good moral and social development is seen in their thorough understanding of right and wrong, their understanding of feeling safe and the positive relationships they have with one another. They show a willingness to undertake responsibilities and contribute to the school in a variety of different roles, for example, as 'eco warriors', house captains and 'huff 'n puff' play leaders. These different opportunities contribute positively to pupils' personal development, helping them to develop good organisational skills. Attendance

is satisfactory and improving further. They have a satisfactory cultural awareness through their knowledge and understanding of other faiths and the tolerance and understanding they show to those from different cultures and backgrounds. They are extremely enthusiastic about school; as one pupil typically commented, 'I love coming to school because I can play with my friends; it is as good as going to see my Nan.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils like their teachers who, they say, 'listen to us', and describe their learning as 'fun'. They enjoy good relationships with their teachers who manage them well. Occasionally, when pupils are not managed well, they become fidgety and the pace of their learning slows. Pupils have good opportunities to work on their own and with other pupils, on a good range of interesting activities which give them opportunities to find out for themselves. In a numeracy lesson, Year 4 pupils enjoyed solving problems where they had to decide themselves whether to add, subtract, multiply or divide. Pupils are engaged in their learning and are well supported by teaching assistants who work well to improve pupils' levels of confidence and self-esteem. Activities are well planned and meet the needs of all pupils. In most classes, the needs of more able pupils are met well and they experience good levels of challenge, but occasionally activities are not sufficiently stretching for these pupils. Assessment information is used effectively to plan learning, and marking makes clear to pupils what to do to improve their work by identifying the next step in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a range of stimulating learning opportunities which meet the needs of all pupils effectively. A number of strategies have been put in place to improve achievement, for example improving the learning of children as they move from Reception to Year 1 and different writing approaches to stimulate boys, which have had a positive effect on achievement. In some classes, teachers are making stronger links between subjects through the 'Creative Curriculum' to give pupils more opportunities to use their reading, writing and mathematical skills in all subjects. Where these opportunities are planned, pupils' learning has improved. However, these opportunities are not planned consistently in all classes, which limits the opportunities all pupils have to apply their basic skills in all their subjects. There is a good programme of personal, social and health education which has a positive effect on pupils' personal development and well-being. Satisfactory use is made of visits and visitors to enrich pupils' learning. Pupils like the extra clubs which are well attended, being focused mainly on sport and music.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school ethos places a strong emphasis on showing respect and caring for others. All adults are vigilant in their roles of ensuring pupils' safety. Both parents and pupils acknowledged the good levels of care and support which the school provides for all pupils. Parents like the before- and after-school clubs which have been introduced. Pupils are clear that there is always someone to talk to if they have a problem. Child protection arrangements and those to guarantee pupils'

health, safety and welfare meet current requirements. Good systems for checking pupils' attendance have led to improvements in reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent. The school has good links with outside agencies to support, such as Autism Outreach and the educational psychologists. Systems to support pupils' academic guidance are good. All pupils have learning targets in English and mathematics and most have a clear understanding of their personal targets. Pupils are clear about what they need to do to achieve the learning targets, although they are not always given opportunities to follow up on the comments teachers make about their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, senior staff and governors have led the school well through a difficult period of staffing changes. Their vision and ambition for the school have inspired others, and the team of staff is focused on ensuring that all pupils achieve well. The good progress made in improving achievement and the quality of teaching and learning are clear indications that the school has a good capacity to improve further. There are good and accurate systems of self-evaluation, with effective strategies for checking the performance of pupils and the quality of provision. Subject leaders have a clear role to raise standards, and have been effective in improving standards in English. Other staff who are subject leaders and who are less experienced are rising to the challenge and progressing quickly to be effective in their subject-leader roles. Governors fulfil their responsibilities effectively and provide good levels of challenge to the school through the good work of the committees and links between governors and subject leaders. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to the promotion of community cohesion, although this aspect of its work is in the early stages of development. The school has a clear plan to promote community cohesion, but engagement with communities beyond the local area, for example in other towns in the United Kingdom and in other countries, is underdeveloped.

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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	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	2
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?	3
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**

7 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St. Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Stafford ST16 3BT

Thank you for being so welcoming when we visited your school. We thought you were polite and helpful. We enjoyed talking to you and listening to what you had to say. We know you are proud of your school and enjoy your time there. We think that St. Patrick's is a good school, with a number of strengths. These are the main things we found out about your school:

- you make good progress in your work and reach standards that are above average for your age
- you behave well and show good attitudes towards your learning
- you have a good understanding of how to live healthily and stay safe. You told us that there is always an adult to go to if you are worried
- you like the activities and clubs that the school offers, particularly those at lunchtime
- you make a good contribution to the life of the school through the different jobs you do, such as Eco Warriors and 'Huff 'n Puff' play leaders
- you are taught well and told us that your teachers listen to your views and are friendly
- you know your targets and what to do next to improve your work
- the adults in school look after you well and they all work hard to help you do your best.

In order to make the school better we have asked the staff to do the following:

- give you more opportunities to use your reading, writing and mathematical skills in all of your subjects
- improve links with other communities so you learn more about other people in the United Kingdom and the rest of the world.

You can help by continuing to work hard and behave well.

Best Wishes

Brian Holmes

Lead inspector