

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



10 December 2008

Mrs R Mason
Headteacher
St Patrick's R C Primary School
Livesey Street
Collyhurst
Manchester
M4 5HF

Dear Mrs Mason

Ofsted subject survey: good practice in promoting equality

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 10 December 2008 to look at work in promoting equality.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions, but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: observing lessons, scrutinising school documentation, discussions with parents, pupils, teachers, managers, governors and other professionals who provide additional support to the pupils in the school.

The school population is culturally diverse. Just over a quarter of the pupils speak English as an additional language and a large proportion of these are at the early stages of learning English. Currently there are 15 different languages and dialects spoken in the school. The mobility of pupils is much higher than that found nationally and many pupils join and leave the school during the year.

The school demonstrates examples of good practice but also some weaknesses and therefore the quality of provision to promote equalities is satisfactory overall.

Features of good practice observed

- The headteacher has high expectations for all the pupils. The senior leadership team share the same values. Together, they strive to provide a happy and secure place for pupils from all backgrounds to learn, which reflects the school motto of 'always do our best'. The pupils have a strong sense of identity and are happy to talk about their different cultural backgrounds to visitors. The leadership manages the induction

of the many new pupils well and they say that they quickly feel part of the St Patrick's community.

- The school provides a good level of care, guidance and support to pupils with learning difficulties. Pupils with special educational needs are identified early and their progress is tracked effectively. Appropriate intervention and programmes of work are planned for these pupils and class teachers meet their needs well. As a consequence they make progress in line with their peers.
- Staff provide a good range of enrichment activities and all pupils participate well. Opportunities to sing at the Bridgewater Hall raise the pupils' aspirations. A good focus is placed on environmental work. The recent introduction of neighbourhood wardens is popular, particularly as they are led by a member of the community and the pupils are able to see the impact of their work in the locality.
- The school works well with the local authority to provide a good level of support for pupils who are at risk of permanent exclusion. It provides an effective programme of re-integration and all staff work well together to ensure that pupils are not disadvantaged.
- The school has good relationships with traveller families and as a result these pupils make good progress. The leadership is flexible and understanding in its approach to family issues, which allows pupils to feel happy and secure in school. The parents value this and appreciate the support provided.
- The school makes good use of professional volunteers, such as the business in the community reading partners, who listen to pupils read on a regular basis. This provides good additional support for pupils who do not have the opportunity to practise their reading at home. In addition, teaching assistants have been well trained recently to provide reading recovery for pupils who are identified as needing additional help with reading.
- The systems to track the progress of all pupils are developing well. Pupils with additional learning needs, such as those at the early stages of learning English are identified effectively and their progress is monitored by the senior leadership team.
- The promotion of Equalities within the curriculum is generally good, with a number of activities such as Chinese New Year and African dance and musical topics which draw on the experiences and knowledge of pupils and their families from other parts of the world. There is also scope for considerable further development as a result of the school's participation in the 'Creative Partnership'.
- The governing body recognises the challenges faced by the school. It is keen to find ways to improve its understanding of the needs of the different pupil groups and is beginning to make good use of monitoring information. It provides effective support to the senior leadership, particularly in relation to staffing issues. It is in a strong position to ensure that the whole school community is fully involved in raising the aspirations of pupils and parents.

Areas for development

- Despite the good practice as described above, the provision for vulnerable pupils is weakened by a number of factors. For example, the level of specialist support provided for pupils at the early stages of learning English has reduced significantly since the last inspection. It is now barely adequate. This means that some vulnerable pupils are not making fast enough progress in their learning and are unlikely to meet their challenging targets. For example, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, despite a high school and student staff to pupil ratio, children at the early stages of learning English are provided with very little targeted additional adult support. During the visit they were frustrated by their inability to communicate with their peers. The school should work with the local authority to ensure that suitable provision is made for pupils who have English as an additional language. Similarly, the progress of pupils receiving additional reading support is slowed because they do not receive all the sessions planned, due to cover arrangements for frequent staff absence. The school should ensure that intervention programmes are provided as planned in order to improve the rate of individual pupil progress and to lessen the impact of frequent staff absence on pupils.
- The school has a high level of pupil mobility. A significant proportion of pupils leave the school for reasons which are not known and this is not always investigated rigorously by the managers of the school. Regular checks should be made by the managers of the school on pupil mobility, with a greater emphasis on ascertaining the reasons for leaving, and information provided to the leadership, including the governing body to ensure that the implications for staffing and safeguarding are well met.
- Parents report that their children are generally happy and well cared for at school. The school operates an open door policy and has good links with a number of support agencies and other providers, to which it directs parents as appropriate. However, some parents feel that they do not always know how best to support their child's learning and a few working parents feel isolated. The recent introduction of the school website is a positive step towards involving all parents more in the life of the school, though this is still at an early stage of development. The school should continue to find ways to improve communication between home and school, to ensure that all parents are confident to offer their skills to the work of the school and to support their child's learning.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop promoting equalities in St Patrick's RC Primary.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Gill Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector