

# St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Walsall

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104233
<b>Local Authority</b>	Walsall
<b>Inspection number</b>	336263
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 January 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ian Hodgkinson

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	226
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Wendy Jevon
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Gregory Gilroy
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 November 2006
<b>School address</b>	Blue Lane East Walsall WS2 8HN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01922 720063
<b>Fax number</b>	01922 624144
<b>Email address</b>	postbox@st-patricks.walsall.sch.uk

---

<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 January 2010
<b>Inspection number</b>	336263

---

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2010

## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed the school's work, and spent around half of their time looking at learning. They observed nine teachers and 18 lessons, and dropped in briefly on other lessons and activities. Discussions were held with senior and subject leaders, staff, governors, parents and carers, and pupils. Inspectors looked at documentation including pupils' books, the school development plan, minutes of the governing body, records of assessment and tracking of pupils' progress, plans and monitoring information for the support of vulnerable pupils, records of the school's arrangements for the safeguarding and protection of pupils, policies and procedures for promoting equality and countering discrimination, 66 parental questionnaire responses and questionnaire responses from staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the extent of variation in attainment, learning and progress between groups of pupils in classes, with a particular focus on higher attainers
- the success of the school in raising pupils' attainment and improving the quality of provision in Key Stage 1
- the impact of leadership and management at all levels in sustaining and improving the school's performance
- the effectiveness of the school's promotion of aspects of pupils' personal development.

## Information about the school

St Patrick's is a school of average size located close to the centre of Walsall. Pupils are drawn mostly from the immediate local area. Just over two fifths are from Catholic families. A high proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The proportion from minority ethnic groups has risen over recent years and now stands at a little over a third. The number who speak English as an additional language has also been rising. A small but significant minority join the school, especially in the Nursery and Reception classes, in the early stages of learning English. A relatively low proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the majority of these have moderate learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional or social needs. The school has received a number of awards for its work in recent years, including the Healthy Schools and ActiveMark awards and Investors in People designation.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

St Patrick's provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are below the levels expected for their age and leave in Year 6 with attainment that is broadly average. Pupils' progress is satisfactory overall, but there are variations in rates of progress through the school. Children make a strong start in the Nursery and Reception classes, but this rapid progress slows down across Key Stage 1, especially in mathematics. Across Key Stage 2, while pupils make consistently steady progress in most subjects, their success in writing is more variable, and higher attainers in particular did not perform as well as they should in last year's national tests in writing.

The reason for these variations in progress is linked to inconsistencies in teachers' use of assessment information to plan activities which challenge and extend pupils of differing ability. There is very strong practice in this regard in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Elsewhere, teachers' planning does not always set high enough expectations of what pupils should achieve based on what they already know, understand, and can do. As a consequence, in a significant minority of lessons, higher attaining pupils spend too long working on the same tasks and at the same level of challenge as the rest. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. In particular, teachers manage their classes well to ensure that pupils stay focused on their learning and activities. They make good use of a wide range of resources so that learning is often active and enjoyable. A satisfactory curriculum draws widely on local partnerships to successfully enrich the creative and sporting aspects of provision.

The quality of care, support and guidance for pupils is good. In particular, the work done to support the most vulnerable children and their families, often in partnership with other agencies, is of excellent quality. Special provision for pupils with particular learning needs, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language, is well managed and effective in supporting progress. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a well developed understanding of and respect for cultural, faith and ethnic diversity. They get on well together, and work well together in team activities. Pupils' consistently good behaviour in class and around the school makes a strong contribution to their sound learning and to their enjoyment of school.

The school's leaders at all levels, including the governors, know the school well and have wide respect across the school community. Their evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is sharp and accurate. However, school improvement planning does not clearly prioritise the most important aspects for improvement resulting from the school's self-evaluation. Nor does it set out clearly enough timescales

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

or expected outcomes from actions taken to improve provision, to allow leaders to fully account for the progress they are making. Systems to improve the quality of provision are, however, strengthening. In particular, systems for tracking the performance of pupils and classes are increasingly comprehensive and are now informing some highly effective interventions to raise the quality of teaching and learning across the school. As a consequence, there is satisfactory capacity for improvement.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve pupils' academic progress, particularly in mathematics at Key Stage 1 and writing at Key Stage 2.
- Raise the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that, by January 2011, teaching and learning will be judged good or better in at least 75% of lessons, by:
  - making better use of assessment information to plan lessons which stretch and challenge all pupils, especially, though not exclusively, the higher attainers
  - setting high expectations for each group of pupils based on a clear appraisal of what they know, understand and can already do.
- Use the findings of school self-evaluation more effectively to drive improvement by:
  - ensuring that school improvement planning is focused on the key priorities needed to move the school's overall effectiveness from 'satisfactory' to 'good'
  - establishing clear success criteria for all planned improvements and ensuring that leaders and managers at all levels regularly and rigorously review progress against these criteria.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

Overall, pupils' academic achievement is satisfactory. On joining the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children's communication, language and literacy skills are, for many, well below the standards expected for their age. The school has good programmes in place, including an effective phonics scheme, to develop their early confidence in speaking, reading and writing. This ensures that by the time they leave the Reception class most reach the standards expected in these skills. In a lesson in Year 1, the whole class was able to produce very scary written descriptions of the 'Big Bad Wolf' using a wide range of vocabulary with clearly formed letters. No pupil was afraid to independently 'have a go' at spelling unfamiliar words. Reading is a strength across the school and there is good access to a range of books. Boys' literacy has improved markedly as a result of a drive to improve resources so they appeal more directly to their interests. This is reflected in recent assessments at the end of Key Stage 1. However, while writing standards are broadly average by the end of Key Stage 1, higher attainers in particular do not always reach the writing levels they should at the end of Key Stage 2. Similarly, too few pupils reach the higher levels in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1.

Warm relationships exist between individuals and groups of pupils, and are based

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

securely on mutual respect for each other's cultures, beliefs and interests. Pupils feel safe in the school, although a few pupils would like incidents of roughness or bullying in the playground followed up more quickly. Pupils have access to a good range of play equipment at breaks and lunchtimes to keep them active. Their understanding of how to keep healthy is satisfactory. However, information on healthy living does not have a high enough profile in the school to consistently guide pupils when making healthy choices, for example in choosing foods. Pupils take on willingly responsibilities in the school and wider community. The school council does not, however, meet regularly enough to give pupils a strong say in how to improve the school. Attendance rates are broadly average and rates of persistent absence are very low, reflecting very well on the school's work with more vulnerable pupils. The sound development of pupils' basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), together with good collaborative skills and a strong sense of right and wrong, ensures that pupils are prepared satisfactorily for later life.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

The curriculum has been broadened effectively to give pupils some good quality experiences beyond their core subjects of English and mathematics. Local partners, including the town football club and partner secondary schools, offer expertise to enhance the programmes of physical education, art, dance, music and modern languages. Pupils follow a well-planned course of study to deepen their understanding of international issues, in which they are able to apply and develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. This does much to increase their global awareness and furthers their cultural development. However, opportunities are missed, for example, when pupils are writing on global issues, to expect higher quality writing from higher attainers according to their literacy objectives. A satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities is offered.

Lessons typically feature a range of activities supported by good quality resources to make learning enjoyable. Teachers are helped in this by a relatively high number of teaching assistants and volunteers. The teaching assistants are particularly effective in giving small groups of pupils focused additional support when withdrawn from classes. However, they are not always used to best effect in classes to help groups of pupils move on more quickly to tasks adapted to their capabilities, with the result that for too long in some lessons all children are expected to work at the same level. Marking of pupils' work is generally informative, regular, and thorough. It explains constructively how work can be improved but seldom refers to pupils' targets as a means of keeping expectations high.

Some outstanding work has been done to engage parents of more vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities in their children's learning. The school's recently-introduced nurture group for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties has been effective in supporting pupils' progress. Transition arrangements, into school, from class-to-class and on to secondary school, are well managed.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher has secured a well-ordered and cohesive school community based on clear and widely-shared spiritual and moral values. Governors involve themselves closely in the work of the school and ensure that statutory requirements are met. Systems to promote the safety and well-being of staff and pupils are well managed, and the safeguarding of the welfare of children is given an

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

appropriately high priority in the work of the school. Leadership at all levels, including governors, has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, but has not always sharply enough monitored plans to improve performance. Middle leaders have been given effective professional development in their roles and are showing a growing capacity to drive improvement.

The school makes an effective contribution to the promotion of community cohesion. It understands its diverse local community and actively seeks to draw parents and others into its work. It has successfully adapted the curriculum and enrichment activities to raise pupils' understanding of important wider national and international issues. In promoting mutual respect and tolerance the school does much to counter discrimination. It has used performance data to identify and close gaps between the performance of girls and boys, but recognises that it has been less successful in securing consistent success for higher attaining pupils.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

**Early Years Foundation Stage**

Children make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in overcoming some initial weaknesses in communication and language skills. Their progress is monitored carefully. Assessment information is used very well by staff to ensure that activities consistently challenge and move children forward in the development of their skills. The learning environment is very welcoming and engaging, with a large number of colourful indoor and outdoor 'learning labs' which invite children to explore and experiment. Staff guidance ensures that even when children are



**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

independently initiating activities using the learning labs, they are purposefully discovering new information or skills. For example, some Nursery children dressed as bears were able to explain very clearly to the inspector details about bears' habitats, and count the number of fish they had caught and how they could be shared evenly! Just occasionally, children need clearer explanation about the purpose of some more complex activities set up for them. Provision is well led and managed to ensure that children operate in a safe environment. Self-evaluation is strong and based securely on an analysis of the learning and progress of children. Development priorities are clear, although, as in the rest of the school, planning for improvement does not always clearly set out criteria for measuring the success of new initiatives.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

**Views of parents and carers**

Parents and carers have a largely very favourable view of the school. They are strongly of the opinion that the school keeps their children safe and healthy. A number told inspectors, in discussion on the playground and through the questionnaires, how happy their children were at school, and about its strong sense of community. While a very small minority of parents and carers had individual concerns, there were very few patterns among them. A few felt that communication is not regular or clear enough, including on children's progress and on the reasons for school actions, for example in following up attendance. Inspectors found that generally parents and carers are happy with the information on their children's progress and find the staff very accessible, but that this is not entirely consistent from class to class, and inspectors have shared with school leaders where this might be improved. Inspectors agree that teachers could make more reference to pupils' targets in their marking to give parents and carers and pupils a clearer view of progress. A few parents and carers also felt that there were not enough after-school activities, and inspectors agree that at the moment this is an area of satisfactory rather than good provision.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Walsall, to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 66 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 226 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	39	59	24	36	3	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	34	52	32	48	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	21	32	38	58	4	6	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	38	35	53	4	6	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	26	39	37	56	3	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	33	36	55	4	6	2	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	36	41	62	1	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	15	23	35	53	7	11	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	30	40	61	3	5	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	32	36	55	4	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	24	43	65	1	2	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	24	36	40	61	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	26	39	35	53	4	6	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



28 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Walsall WS2 8HN

Many thanks for the welcome you gave to me and my colleagues when we visited the school for its recent inspection. We much enjoyed talking with you and seeing all that you do. We will long remember the choir's super performance in assembly in particular!

Our inspection report has judged that the school gives you a satisfactory quality of education. You make satisfactory progress to reach standards which are similar to those reached by pupils in most schools. Rates of progress do vary across the school, though. Children make quick progress in the Nursery and Reception classes, but in Key Stages 1 and 2 those of you who find work easier to understand are not always asked to do challenging enough tasks to push on to the higher levels. Nonetheless, most of you enjoy your time in school and teachers prepare interesting activities for you. You are well behaved and show a good deal of understanding and respect for the beliefs and cultures of others, in your own community and in the wider world.

The leaders of the school have a clear understanding of its strengths and areas to develop. We have asked the school to do the following to improve further:

- Improve your rate of progress, particularly in mathematics at Key Stage 1 and writing at Key Stage 2.
- Ensure that those of you who find learning easier are always challenged to reach high standards in your work.
- Improve the way in which leaders and managers of the school check on the success of actions they are taking to make things better.

You can help in all of this by letting your teachers know if you understand what you are doing and feel you need more challenging work. I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson

Lead inspector

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).**