

St Patrick's RC Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105726
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	336546
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Hemmings

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Fr P Sumner
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Halliwell
Date of previous school inspection	2 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors who visited 19 lessons or parts of lessons. The inspectors observed eight teachers and held discussions with governors, staff, parents and carers, groups of pupils and the School Improvement Partner. They observed the school's work, and looked at school policies, records of meetings, assessment information and curriculum planning. In addition, 42 responses to parents and carers' questionnaires were received and analysed.

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

- whether pupils make sufficient progress in Years 1 and 2
- how consistently teachers set work that meets pupils' individual needs
- the effectiveness of subject leaders in promoting school improvement
- how well the outdoor area for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is used to support their development.

Information about the school

This average-sized school has gained a number of national awards, including the Activemark. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is high, as is the percentage whose first language is not or believed not to be English. There are 19 different languages spoken by pupils and increasing numbers are starting school with little or no English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of educational needs, is broadly average.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school provides a good quality of education based on Christian values. The headteacher is a good role model for staff, setting focused educational direction and having a clear vision for the school's improvement. This vision is shared by all involved with the school and a strong team ethos is evident. Leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses because their self-evaluation is accurate. This enables them to target priority areas for development. A good example of this is the action taken to improve attendance over the last two years. As a result, it has risen significantly and is now average. Subject leaders monitor and evaluate provision and outcomes in their subjects carefully. Nonetheless, they are not fully effective in acting upon the evaluations to bring about improvement. The school has successfully consolidated and improved on its good performance at the last inspection. The capacity for further improvement is good.

Pupils make good progress throughout the school. Consequently, by the end of Year 6 they attain broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science. This represents good achievement from their overall skills which are well below expected levels, particularly in language development. Teaching is effective overall and contributes to pupils' good achievement. Nonetheless, not all teachers consistently set work that closely matches pupils' individual needs. Leaders are determined to remedy this. Pupils do not have a wide vocabulary and this limits their ability to express their ideas clearly in speech and through their writing. Teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to explore ideas for themselves, particularly in their mathematical problem-solving activities and scientific investigations. Pupils' improved attendance and broadly average attainment by the time they leave Year 6 shows that they are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of education and their future lives. Pupils' good behaviour and their positive attitudes to learning contribute to the good progress they make. The curriculum is enhanced by a range of enrichment activities that add further interest and variety to pupils' learning. Improvements to the outdoor area for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have made it a more stimulating place in which to learn. Nonetheless, its use does not fully support their development across all areas of learning. The promotion of community cohesion within school and the local community is good. As a result, the school community is highly cohesive and pupils from different backgrounds get on noticeably well with each other.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement from good to outstanding by:

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- ensuring that teachers are more consistent in setting work that meets their individual needs
- extending pupils' vocabulary to enable them to express their ideas clearly when speaking and to help to improve the quality of their writing
- improve the quality of tasks set for pupils to provide more opportunities for them to explore ideas for themselves, particularly in mathematics and science.
- Involve subject leaders fully in taking action to bring about improvement in their subjects.
- Improve the use of the outdoor area in the Early Years Foundation Stage to better promote children's development across all areas of learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils achieve well, showing interest and enjoyment in their work. They are keen to learn and set about their activities with enthusiasm. Pupils particularly enjoy working together during practical activities. This was observed when pupils in a Year 1 mathematics lesson were working in small groups to investigate the capacity of different containers. Pupils are keen to make contributions to discussions, but their lack of an extensive vocabulary limits their ability to express thoughts clearly at times. Their writing lacks imagination and depth because of this limited vocabulary. Pupils have secure mathematical calculation skills, but are not as adept at applying these to solve real-life number problems. They have a sound understanding of key scientific ideas but are less skilled at designing, carrying out and evaluating scientific investigations. Pupils are competent in using information and communication technology in a variety of contexts, such as using the internet to research information in history and geography. There is no significant difference between the achievements nor the learning of different groups.

Pupils clearly know the difference between right and wrong and are kind and considerate towards others. They engage effectively with those from different ethnic backgrounds. They understand that they share common values but they respect differences. They contribute well to school life by willingly taking on responsibilities, including being a member of the school council and manning the school office at lunchtimes. They make a good contribution to the wider community, such as by raising funds for local charities and singing at the local elderly resource centre. Most pupils have adopted a healthy lifestyle and talk enthusiastically about the need to take regular exercise and eat a balanced diet. They have a good understanding of what constitutes an unsafe situation and act responsibly in and around school. Pupils say they feel safe and secure in school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers plan their lessons carefully to build on previous work covered. This enables pupils to use what they already know and understand to support their current learning. Good classroom management means pupils are fully engaged in their work and little time is lost. Tasks usually ensure that groups of different ability are given work that challenges them effectively, but this is not always the case and this limits progress at times. The lack of sufficient opportunity for pupils to explore ideas for themselves hinders their development as independent learners. Teachers use marking and discussion well to show pupils how they might improve their work. Teaching assistants are mainly deployed effectively to support pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to other pupils because of the well-targeted extra support they receive in lessons. Adults promote good relationships, which leads to classrooms being friendly and calm places in which to learn.

Extra-curricular activities, including sports, cheerleading and gardening clubs, are well attended and enrich the curriculum. Visits to places of educational interest, including orienteering in Tandle Hill Country Park and opportunities to work with a variety of visitors, extend pupils' skills and widen their horizons. Pupils' cultural awareness is promoted effectively through work in geography and religious education, and within themes, such as French Day. The school's commitment to providing a variety of good-quality sporting experiences is reflected in the school gaining the Activemark. The programme for personal development contributes well to pupils' good progress in this aspect of their learning.

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The school provides a safe and welcoming learning environment. Staff know the steps to take if they have any concerns about the well-being of a pupil. Well-targeted support for pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable plays an important role in supporting their learning and development. Transition arrangements are smooth throughout the school and onto secondary school, and contribute well to pupils' development. Established links with outside agencies, including the educational psychologist, ensure that extra support for individual pupils is readily available if required.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders embed ambition and drive improvement well by focusing the school on priorities. They spur the enthusiasm of staff and direct their efforts to good effect. Leaders make good use of a variety of rigorous monitoring activities to ensure that planning is based on good-quality data. Target setting is realistic and challenging and leads to good outcomes. The governing body is supportive of the school and influential in guiding its strategic development. Subject leaders carry out their roles diligently but are not fully involved in bringing about improvement. The school promotes equal opportunity and tackles discrimination well. Leaders have detailed information about individual pupils and regularly check their performance and their contribution to school life. As a result, any underachievement is identified early and intervention programmes put into place to bring about improvement.

Leaders actively seek out and take full account of the views of parents and carers about important issues and provide them with clear information about the progress their children make. Partnership activities, including the local sixth form college and the Werneth Cluster of Schools, provide pupils with opportunities the school cannot offer on its own, and have enhanced pupils' modern foreign language and drama skills. All safeguarding requirements are met, with the school having clear policies and procedures to ensure the safeguarding and welfare of pupils. The school is a significant agent for cohesion in the local community, bringing together families from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. Leaders are working to strengthen cohesion at national and global levels, which include established links with a school in St Helens that has a different social and cultural mix and well-developed international charity work.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

In the Nursery and Reception classes, children make good progress because adults work well as a team and provide activities that are interesting, practical and often based on children's own experiences. As a result, children enjoy their activities and are enthusiastic about all they do. This was evident in a session for children in the Nursery in which they were using a variety of materials to make Father's Day cards. The balance between activities directed by adults and those chosen by children is usually good. Nonetheless, at times there is too much direction by adults and this limits the opportunity for children to find things out for themselves. Children play happily together, taking turns fairly and willingly sharing resources. An interesting range of enrichment activities enhances the curriculum, such as walks around the school environment and visits to Oldham Art Gallery and Library. Children's welfare is promoted well and the support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English as an additional language is good. Assessment procedures have improved because of good leadership and the fact that detailed data provide an accurate record of children's progress and achievement. Activities provided in the outdoor area do not always link sufficiently to learning that has taken place indoors and do not fully support development across all areas of learning. The engagement with parents and carers is good and they are kept informed of their children's progress and how they can support learning at home.

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

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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

Just over 18% of parents and carers completed questionnaires. The very large majority of these were positive about the school's work and the efforts of all staff. Two comments were typical, 'This is a lovely school, children are really friendly and help each other,' and, 'The school is focused on wanting the best for children.' A few did not agree that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. There was no such behaviour observed during the inspection and pupils say it is dealt with promptly if it occurs. A very small minority of parents and carers did not agree that the school is led and managed effectively. Inspectors judge that leadership and management are good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Patrick's RC Primary and Nursery School 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 42 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 230 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	74	11	26	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	29	69	12	29	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	24	57	18	43	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	57	15	36	2	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	28	67	12	29	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	55	17	40	2	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	55	17	40	2	5	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)	17	40	22	52	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	45	18	43	4	10	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	43	19	45	4	10	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	40	21	50	2	5	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	16	38	21	50	4	10	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	25	60	15	36	1	2	1	2

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



21 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Patrick's RC Primary School, Oldham, OL8 1EF

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave the team when we inspected your school. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing the many interesting things you do. You attend a good school.

These are the inspectors' judgements.

- Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes and by the time you leave school you have achieved well.
- You behave well and enjoy coming to school.
- Adults look after you well and make sure you are safe.
- You make a good contribution to school life and to the local community.
- In your questionnaires, you say you learn a lot at school and adults are interested in your views.
- The headteacher, staff and governors are working hard to help you do even better.

This is what we have asked your school to do now.

- Make sure that your teachers always give you work that makes you think hard, improve your skills in communicating clearly in speech and writing, and provide more opportunities for you to find things out for yourselves.
- Develop the skills of teachers who lead subjects so that they can help the school to improve.
- Make better use of the outdoor area for children in the Nursery and Reception classes to support their learning.

All of you are a credit to your school and you can help it improve even more by continuing to try your best in your activities.

Yours sincerely

Melvyn Hemmings

Lead Inspector

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