



St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122816
Local Authority NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Inspection number 292518
Inspection dates 11–12 December 2006
Reporting inspector George Knights

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Whitehouse Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Bircotes
Age range of pupils	3–11		Bircotes DN11 8EF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01302 743145
Number on roll (school)	101	Fax number	01302 743145
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr D Clements
		Headteacher	Mr S Dent
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 11–12 December 2006	Inspection number 292518
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

St Patrick's is a small Catholic school serving the villages of Bircotes, Harworth and Styrrup. Most pupils join the school by entering the nursery class when they are 3 years old. Attainment on entry is well below average. Around a quarter of pupils are identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. A small number of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and even fewer have English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Patrick's provides a satisfactory education for all of its pupils and this is also the school's own judgement. Children get off to a good start and progress well in the nursery class. They quickly become familiar with school routines and learn to work well together. Children who are four years old enter the same class as pupils who are in Year 1 with knowledge and skills that are below those typical of four year olds nationally. Achievement in this class is satisfactory, as it is in other classes in the school. Results in national assessments at the end of Year 2 have been below average, but have improved over the past two years. Pupils currently in Year 2 are working at below average standards but are making satisfactory progress.

Results in national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2005 were below average and much lower than they should have been. In 2006, results were also below average, but were better than in the previous year. This was because the pupils involved had made satisfactory progress during their last year in the school. Targets were not met last year. Those set for the coming year are challenging but achievable, given the improvements currently taking place in teaching. Teaching and learning are now satisfactory, but teachers do not stimulate or interest pupils enough. Activities in lessons sometimes do not challenge pupils to do their best. Pupils are eager to do well, but often do not exercise very good self-discipline. They frequently chatter in class and call out, rather than follow the patterns of behaviour encouraged by teachers. They enjoy playing together and talk enthusiastically about the many after-school activities they take part in. Attendance is improving but remains below average and this means that the learning of too many pupils is disrupted.

The school makes a sound contribution to pupils' personal development and well-being. In keeping with the school's Christian ethos, pupils are encouraged to care for others less fortunate than themselves. Through fund-raising and other activities, they make a sound contribution to the wider community. Pupils feel safe at school and talk knowledgeably about the need to adopt healthy lifestyles. Parents feel confident that pupils are safe and well looked after. The care and support provided for pupils is satisfactory and the school is committed to meeting the needs of all. Hence pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive sound support, as do those for whom English is not their home language. Currently pupils are not given enough guidance on how they can improve their work. Lessons cover a wide range of subjects and pupils appreciate the contribution that trips and visits, including residential trips for older pupils, make to enriching what they do in class. Pupils are aware that they are growing up in a diverse cultural society and the school provides them with a sound preparation for the next stages of education and for adult life. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Since his appointment four terms ago, the headteacher has given a very strong, clear lead. He has identified aspects of provision needing improvement and has acted decisively to implement a programme to bring these improvements about. During this time he has received very good support from officers and advisers of the local authority. They have worked with teachers to help them improve their practice and this has led to pupils learning more successfully.

Currently teachers do not take a sufficient share in the leadership, or enough responsibility for aspects of the school's work. Nor do they contribute enough to the evaluation of how well the school is doing. Governors' effectiveness has improved recently and is now satisfactory. Developments in the recent past mean that improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory and the school now gives satisfactory value for money. The capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards by improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- Extend the role of middle managers, both in subject leadership and in evaluating the school's work.
- Raise attendance levels so that pupils' learning is less disrupted.
- Improve the guidance given to pupils on how they can improve the quality of their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children make good progress from a low base in their nursery year, particularly in the development of their speaking and listening skills. Satisfactory progress through the year in which they become five means that pupils enter Year 1 with knowledge and skills below those typical of children nationally. Results in national assessment at the end of Year 2 have been below average in recent years, but are improving. Pupils have underachieved in Years 3 to 6 recently and national test results at the end of Year 6 have been below average, particularly in 2005. In 2006, results were better and school records show that the pupils involved had made satisfactory progress during their last year in school. Pupils currently in the school are making satisfactory progress. Teachers are aware of the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and thus provide the support necessary for these pupils to make progress similar to that of others in the class.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Pupils like coming to school and they get on well together. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe and they talk confidently about how they can adopt healthy lifestyles. They have a good awareness of the needs of those less fortunate than themselves, as illustrated by the fund-raising activities they take part in. They are acquiring the skills necessary to prepare themselves for the next stages of education and for adult life. Behaviour around the school is good, but is only satisfactory in lessons. This is because many pupils have not learned to listen and concentrate, especially when other pupils are speaking. Hence chatter or calling out disrupts the flow of lessons. Attendance has improved over the past four terms but

remains below average, despite the efforts of the school to encourage regular attendance.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and are good in the nursery class. Almost all pupils are taught in mixed age classes and teachers are careful to ensure that activities are appropriate for pupils' ages. Work is also generally matched to the needs of pupils of different abilities and teachers work well with their teaching assistants to ensure that all pupils are able to participate. In their planning, teachers do not always structure activities carefully enough to enable pupils to learn as quickly as possible. Nor do they pay enough attention to how they might stretch the most able, for instance through posing more challenging questions. Hence, pupils often spend time undertaking routine tasks and exercises rather than engaging in stimulating activities that would motivate them better. The marking of pupils' work is regularly undertaken but teachers' comments do not provide pupils with enough guidance on how to improve their work. The assessment of pupils' work is improving and teachers are beginning to use the outcomes of assessment to guide their planning. Pupils are not involved enough in assessing their own work and teachers do not always provide pupils with sufficient detail about the targets for their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides pupils with a satisfactory curriculum. Recently French has been added, having previously been offered as an after-school activity. Links are made between subjects to help pupils make better sense of how learning in the different topics fits together. Pupils respond well to the range of extra-curricular activities provided and appreciate the opportunities to learn to play musical instruments. They value the enrichment offered by visitors to the school, such as theatre companies, and talk enthusiastically about their trips and visits.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Arrangements to ensure that pupils are safe are applied carefully by all staff. Steps to safeguard learners are fully in place. Provision for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is sound, enabling these pupils to be fully integrated into school life. Pupils feel able to talk to staff if they have any problems. The tracking of pupils' progress is sound, enabling teachers to meet pupils' needs. However, this information is not yet being used sufficiently to provide pupils with enough detail about the progress they are making or to set them goals to aim for. Pupils' views are sought, both through the school council and in class

discussions. The school also regularly seeks the views of parents, who are very confident that their children are safe and well cared for.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Since he arrived just over a year ago, the headteacher has provided the strong, clear and decisive leadership necessary to begin to improve standards. A clear vision for the future of the school is linked to a detailed plan of the steps necessary to maintain the improvements currently being implemented. The analysis of pupils' performance is improving and is being used to set challenging but achievable targets. The school has identified the need to extend and share more widely the leadership and management of subjects. The overall evaluation of how well the school is doing is accurate. Arrangements are planned to ensure the greater involvement of staff in the evaluation of the school's work. Until recently governors have not been fulfilling their responsibilities adequately. The chair of governors, appointed two years ago, has been instrumental in bringing about improvements in the working of the governing body. Governance is now satisfactory, and the need for governors to become more involved in helping shape the strategic direction of the school and evaluating its work is acknowledged. The school makes sound use of the resources available to it. This is illustrated by the good use of surplus funds to provide additional teaching time as part of the strategy to raise standards.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

13 December 2006

Dear Children

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Whitehouse Road, Bircotes, Doncaster DN11 8EF

I would like to thank you all very much for making me so welcome when I came to inspect your school recently. I really enjoyed coming to your lessons, joining you in assembly and watching you play together. Thank you for talking to me about your work and helping me to find my way around.

You clearly like coming to school and your teachers and their assistants help you to get along together well. You told me about how the school has improved recently and this is obvious in the progress that you are now making in lessons. There is still more that your teachers can do to make lessons more interesting and they need to give you more guidance on how you can do better. Some of you are often absent from school. This disrupts your learning and you can help your teachers by trying to attend more regularly. You obviously feel very safe in school and this is because teachers and other members of staff care for you and make sure that you get the support you need. You care for the needs of others and this is clear from the fund-raising activities you take part in.

Your new headteacher has been very successful in improving the school in the past year and a half and he has exciting plans for making the school even better. He plans to improve what goes on in your classrooms even more. I have asked him to get all teachers more involved in leading improvement in subjects and also to help him to identify where the school is being successful and what more needs to be done.

My very best wishes to you. I hope that you all do very well in the future.

Yours sincerely

George Knights Lead Inspector