

# St Catherine's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112305
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	295380
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 June 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jennie Platt

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	107
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Peter Brooks
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Richard Gaizely
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 February 2006
<b>School address</b>	Drovers Lane Penrith Cumbria CA11 9EL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01768 242170
<b>Fax number</b>	01768 242171

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a small school and pupils are taught in four mixed age classes. The vast majority of pupils are White British; a small number are from minority ethnic heritage and are learning to speak English as an additional language. Twelve Traveller children were attending the school at the time of the inspection. This is above average. Few pupils are entitled to free school meals. The percentage of pupils assessed as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Pupils attend from a wide geographic area, which is varied socially and economically and includes pockets of disadvantage. A considerable number of pupils start or leave the school at different times during the school year. The school currently has an enhanced level of support from the partnership with the local authority.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The effectiveness of the school and its value for money have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. The school is popular in the community and has the full confidence of parents and pupils. The strategic plans that were put in place following the previous inspection are beginning to bear fruit and standards and attendance are improving. The redistribution of management responsibilities and additional staffing at the school have enabled the headteacher to be a more effective manager. More rigorous checks on pupils' progress are now carried out and this is ensuring that early signs of underachievement are identified and tackled, leading to pupils making much better progress in Key Stage 1. All staff and governors are involved in evaluating what is happening in school and this ensures that the whole school has an accurate picture of what is working well and what needs attention. As a result, the school has made good progress in tackling the issues from the last inspection and has satisfactory capacity to continue to improve.

This is a caring school and pupils say they feel secure and know that an adult is always available when needed. Personal development is good and has improved since the last inspection. Pupils enjoy school and most now attend regularly. Teachers' expectations of pupil behaviour are now consistently high across the school. This leads to well behaved pupils who have a good circle of friends. The school is a real community, which is successful at ensuring that children from the Traveller community and the recent influx from Eastern European families settle quickly and feel part of the school. Pupils give close attention to the important messages about health and safety and so are knowledgeable about how to keep fit and safe. They have a good understanding of their role in the school and wider community. Older pupils learn to be play leaders, organising games for the younger ones and all are involved in raising funds for charity. Their preparation for life ahead is good.

Teaching and learning have improved and are satisfactory. This has successfully raised standards from the below average national assessment results seen at the end of Years 2 and 6 in 2006. Achievement is satisfactory by Year 6 but is good and much improved in Key Stage 1, which was a particular concern at the time of the last inspection. This has been tackled well. From a below average starting point, children make good progress through the Foundation Stage in their personal and social development because good attention is given to their needs. Many exceed the goals set nationally for personal development by the end of the Foundation Stage. From a low start, they make satisfactory progress in their early literacy and numeracy skills. Teaching is good in Key Stage 1 and this helps pupils make good progress. More able pupils are challenged well and standards are above average in reading and average in writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 2 but not as great as for the younger pupils because teaching, although always at least satisfactory, is sometimes not as brisk or varied in its approach. Although standards are broadly average and improved on previous years, and achievement is satisfactory by the end of the Key Stage, more able pupils are not consistently achieving as well as they ought in science and writing.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is enriched by a good range of extra clubs and activities, visitors and educational visits. Pupils welcome and benefit from such opportunities. Older pupils really grew in confidence during their recent stay in Scarborough. Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory but the small teaching space inside and out restricts opportunities for developing

a creative curriculum that encourages children to take greater responsibility for, and show increased independence in, their learning to fully meet the needs of the youngest children.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher's focus on creating a happy school is successful with pupils appreciating this approach and responding well through the way they behave with each other. Issues identified in the last inspection are being tackled successfully and the quality of provision and achievement in Key Stage 1 has improved significantly. There is a stronger focus from the school's leadership on improving the academic performance of pupils. The school accurately identifies key priorities for improvement; although, actions to accomplish them are not always linked closely enough to raising standards.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the level of challenge and variety of teaching approaches in Key Stage 2 to raise the achievement of the more able pupils in science and writing.
- Improve the curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage to build improved opportunities for children to take greater responsibility for their learning.
- Strengthen the school's plans for improvement to ensure actions are clear and implemented well with a strong link to measuring their impact on standards.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

The achievement of pupils, including Traveller pupils, is satisfactory. From a low starting point, children make good progress in their personal and social development and many achieve level above those expected for children at the age of 5. They make satisfactory progress from a low start in developing early literacy and mathematics skills and most are still working towards the end of Foundation Stage goals in both areas by the end of the Reception year. The good progress in children's personal and social development is because of the benefits gained from working alongside older pupils in Year 1 pupils who give them confidence and encouragement.

Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2006 were below average in writing and mathematics and average in reading. The majority of pupils reached the level expected for their age but in reading and mathematics no pupils exceeded this level. The school has tackled this concern effectively by ensuring that teaching is more challenging. The progress made by pupils in Key Stage 1 is now good. Standards in Year 2 are now above average in reading with almost half of the pupils exceeding the level expected for their age; they are average in writing and mathematics. The school's test results at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2006 were too low and showed underachievement for several pupils, particularly the more able. This cohort was large because of an influx of pupils at the start of the school year and attendance during the year was erratic. Most pupils who had attended the school regularly from Year 2 to Year 6 made satisfactory progress. Better use of assessment to track progress and provide help when underachievement is identified has now improved progress of all pupils. Current assessment information shows a clear improvement and standards in Year 6 that are now broadly average. The majority make satisfactory progress. More able pupils are now making satisfactory progress in reading and mathematics but are still not making the progress expected in writing and science. Currently, Year 6 pupils are well placed to meet the challenging target set for them.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning through English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. Pupils with statements of special educational need make good progress because of help being closely tailored to their difficulties. Until this year, boys had not been achieving as well as girls, partially due to attendance issues, but this has now improved with boys and girls achieving equally well.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The overall personal development and well-being of pupils is good and has improved since the last inspection. This is a happy community and pupils enjoy their education. Pupils are correct when they say the school is a friendly and safe place to learn. Warm and caring relationships mean that pupils know who to approach if worried. Although some parents expressed a concern about bullying, this was not supported by pupils who were adamant that bullying and racial harassment are not tolerated at the school. Most pupils show good attitudes to work; although, some could give more attention to the presentation of their written work. Behaviour is good. During a very rainy lunchtime pupils played together harmoniously. Attendance has improved since the last inspection, is close to the national average and is improving in response to some imaginative initiatives. Pupils are eager to keep healthy. The school is part of 'A Better Way to School' initiative and an increasing number of pupils walk to school. Close links exist with the local and wider community. Pupils recognise they have a role to play in helping others and older pupils speak fondly of the younger pupils to whom they act as a buddy. Pupils raise considerable funds for charity. Every Year 6 pupil is a member of the School Council and they take this role very seriously and are proud of the improvements they have made to the school. Pupils enjoy competition and were the winners of the inter-school Space Race Challenge in 2006. Pupils grow in self-esteem in school and, with their improving academic skills, are well prepared for the future.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The Catholic ethos underpins daily life and pupils celebrate talents in each other. For example, in Year 6 pupils describe each other as 'funny, kind and a good friend.' This is a welcoming school because pupils are polite and helpful to visitors.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and this improvement is a major factor for the rise in standards. Teaching is good in Key Stage 1 and is much improved from the last inspection. Teachers manage lessons well and plan carefully to ensure that lessons run smoothly. Additional training has raised teachers' confidence in the subjects they teach. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) often adds interest to lessons. This was seen in Year 6 where pupils really got to grips with film terminology and methods following an imaginative video. Good teaching in Key Stage 1 includes some adventurous ideas; such as, the topic on the magic box, which sustained pupils' interest and willingness to write. The variety of teaching approaches is limited in some other year groups, including in the Foundation Stage, and insufficient attention is sometimes given to learning independently or through activity. This restricts achievement in science particularly for the most able with pupils not being encouraged to follow up their own lines of enquiry. Occasionally, teaching is not brisk enough or sufficiently challenging; for

example, more able pupils have to complete an easy task before moving on to harder work. Although the use of work sheets has reduced, some activities involve pupils copying out work unnecessarily and this takes away the enjoyment of learning.

Although teachers are at an early stage of including pupils in their own assessment, many include comments in marking that tell pupils how to make their work better.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

Personal and social development is a strong aspect of the curriculum and leads to a calm and orderly school, which has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Careful planning ensures a well-balanced curriculum and checks that pupils in the mixed age classes do not repeat or miss any aspects of the National Curriculum. In Key Stage 2, the curriculum is organised so that teachers lead their specialist subjects rather than staying with one class. This has advantages in pupils benefiting from teachers' subject knowledge but leads to some missed opportunities to use literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall, but the small classroom and limited outdoor space restricts opportunities for children to learn through first hand activities and through developing independence and responsibility through creative play. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and others requiring extra help in speaking English are well supported by experienced teaching assistants and have full access to the curriculum. The curriculum is enhanced through a good range of after-school activities, particularly in physical education that contributes well to pupils' appreciation of keeping fit.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Good attention is given to pupils' well-being and parents are happy that their children are looked after in school. Safeguarding procedures are in place. The school checks carefully on the background and suitability of all adults working in school. Good links exist with external agents and this is especially beneficial for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, children from the Traveller community and those learning English as an additional language. The newly appointed parent support adviser is strengthening the school's support for the more vulnerable and those needing help in improving attendance. This is just one example of the many initiatives that are having a positive impact on the rate of attendance.

Systems to track and advise pupils about their academic progress are good and are major factors contributing to improvement in achievement. The school has detailed assessments of pupils' progress as they move through the school and is stepping in early where pupils are at risk of underachieving. This has led to the improvement in the progress and achievement of pupils through Key Stage 1 and in the achievement of able pupils in reading and mathematics.

Half-termly assessments are carried out and this enables the school to identify and provide for pupils who may be starting to fall behind the expected progress. Consequently, the school is aware of the need to raise attainment for the more able in writing and science.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The headteacher has always kept the focus on a caring community and this enables pupils to learn in a well ordered school. Since the last inspection the headteacher has dedicated more time to managing the school and leading improvement. This has enabled him to strengthen the school's focus on raising pupils' academic achievement and with clear success. With effective support from the local authority, the management roles in school have been reorganised and developed. Self-evaluation is satisfactory. Performance is more closely monitored and weaknesses are identified and addressed in the school's plan for improvement. Although actions in the plan are clear, they are not always linked closely enough to standards and therefore success is not easily measured. Teaching is monitored regularly and has improved but the school has not yet got a clear understanding of what is needed to raise the quality of teaching from satisfactory to good.

Governance is good. Governors have been committed to improving the school. They are regular visitors, review pupils' work and watch them learning in lessons. As a result, they are far more informed about what is happening in school. They give good attention to health and safety in school and also to ensuring that finances are controlled efficiently.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	3
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

18 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Catherine's Catholic Primary School, Penrith, CA11 9EL

Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school. Your smiling faces and willingness to chat cheered up the rainy days. I enjoyed seeing how friendly you are and am pleased you enjoy school and know how to look after yourselves and keep healthy. I was impressed by the school council. Their willingness to help others contributes greatly to the caring atmosphere in your school.

Your school has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. I know that staff and governors are very keen to make your school even better. The school has worked hard to improve attendance and to help you make better progress. It was good to see how this has led to improvements, particularly for younger pupils in the school. You can help your teachers make the school even better by continuing to work hard. There is potential for some of you to do better in your writing and in science. Handwriting and the presentation of work could be better at times and I have asked your teachers to see how they can vary their teaching to provide greater challenge for some of you in science and writing activities. This will help you make even better progress. I know you enjoy most lessons and have asked your teachers to look at including even more exciting ideas and to consider different ways of organising their lessons to make learning even more fun, particularly in Key Stage 2. The youngest children in the Reception class enjoy school but their classroom is small and I have asked the school to look at how best this space can be used to provide activities that are even more interesting and give more opportunities for children to explore and be creative for themselves.

The older pupils told me how much they have enjoyed their time at your school and I know they will take many happy memories with them when they move to their new schools.

I wish you all well for the future!

Yours sincerely

Mrs J E Platt

Inspector