

St Patrick's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108845
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	309815
Inspection date	1 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Brian Blake HMI

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	111
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Michael Hendy
Headteacher	Mrs Mary Wood
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2005
School address	Smith Street Ryhope Sunderland Tyne and Wear SR2 0RQ
Telephone number	0191 553 6256
Fax number	0191 553 6256

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following aspects of its work: the provision for pupils' personal development and well-being, the quality of teachers' planning for different ability groups, and the effectiveness of leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation (SEF), nationally published pupil performance data, lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work books and additional documentation provided by the school, and discussions with the headteacher, chair of governors and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its SEF, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

St Patrick's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School is much smaller than the average size primary school. The school serves the village of Ryhope, on the outskirts of Sunderland. Almost all the pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than average, as is the percentage of those with a statement of special educational need. There are six classes some of which comprise of mixed age groups.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Patrick's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided School is providing a good standard of education for its pupils.

Children start school in Reception with skills and personal attributes below those expected for their age. Focused teaching and a well planned range of learning activities ensure that the children make good progress throughout the Foundation stage, so that by the time they reach the beginning of Year 1, they have generally exceeded the levels expected for their age. Pupils continue to make good progress throughout Key Stages 1 and 2. In the most recent national assessments and tests, pupils achieved above average standards in all the core subjects at both key stages; more significantly so at Key Stage 1 where, for example, the standard in reading was exceptionally high. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress relative to their capabilities. Year-on-year achievement can vary because of the small numbers of pupils in each year group. However, there has been a trend of continued improvement since the previous inspection, although this pattern of achievement has been most noticeable over the past two years.

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good because of the good quality care, guidance and support provided by all adults who work in the school. The pupils feel safe in school because, as they say, 'it is a small and happy school, and everyone knows each other'. There have been no recorded incidents of bullying or racism over the past three years and behaviour is good. The school has achieved the 'Healthy Schools Award', which ensures that the pupils are aware of the need to eat healthily and take regular exercise. Although attendance is satisfactory overall, it is influenced by a small minority of parents who choose to take family holidays during term time. The overwhelming majority of pupils are very enthusiastic in their praise of teachers, the activities provided in and out of lessons and the friendliness which they say everyone shows when in school; the quality of these aspects ensures that pupils enjoy their education at St Patrick's. The school council is developing its autonomous role well within the school, with good opportunities for council members to discuss issues that are important to them and other pupils in the school. Links with the local community have developed well since the previous inspection, including local and national charities and some local businesses.

Good quality teaching contributes to the pupils' enjoyment of school as they indicated enthusiastically in discussions with the inspector. Teachers' planning is thorough and well matched to the different abilities and ages in classes. All lessons start with a clear explanation of what the pupils are expected to learn and the range of learning activities that are planned link well with the lesson objectives. Very good relationships between pupils, and pupils and teachers, enable good progress to be made in lessons. Lessons are characterised by happy, enthusiastic pupils who concentrate well and listen carefully to what the teacher is saying. In literacy and numeracy lessons, the use of group work according to ability is working well and ensures that the pupils make good progress relative to their capabilities. Those pupils most in need of additional help in lessons receive well targeted support from teaching assistants; this ensures that they maintain a good pace to their learning and make good progress in their work.

The curriculum is good overall and enhanced by a range of extra activities in and out of lessons. Coverage of key skills in literacy and numeracy are good and are helping the pupils to achieve the above average standards in national assessments and tests.

The school is a very caring community and all staff are sensitive to the personal and social needs of the pupils. This was demonstrated by one pupil, who said, 'Teachers care for you and will always help you when you need it.' The pupils are very aware of their targets for learning in the core subjects and many indicated that this makes the school 'challenging'. Teachers have developed very secure systems for tracking pupils' progress, although the regular sharing of this valuable information with governors is underdeveloped.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has gained the respect of staff, governors and the overwhelming majority of parents. However, a small number of parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that they would appreciate more regular and timely information about their child's progress at school. The headteacher and governors know well the school's strengths and areas for future development. Development planning is generally good and well focused on raising standards further. However, while this plan is detailed, some of the success measures identified for assessing the school's progress against identified priorities and actions are too general. Governors perform their role well and the minutes from recent meetings show that they discuss a wide range of issues that are targeted at improving the school's work further. Financial management is good overall, with the school anticipating a successful outcome from its bid for the financial management standards award. The school, therefore, achieves good value for money and has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the Foundation Stage is good. Secure baseline assessment of the children's abilities indicate that when the children start in Reception, they possess levels of personal skills, attributes and abilities below those expected for their age. However, detailed planning and good teaching ensures that the curriculum matches well with the children's age and stage of development and enables the vast majority to make good progress in their learning. The children are very settled at school and observation of them working in lessons indicates that they know school routines well and are able to work effectively as individuals and in small groups. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good, with a clear sense of purpose for the future development of this phase. Young children with learning difficulties and/disabilities make good progress because of the targeted adult support available.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the information of pupils' progress, collected by class teachers, is shared with the governing body as a means of helping it to regularly review the achievement and standards of the pupils.
- Improve the quality of the success measures in the school development plan to assist senior managers in more accurately assessing the school's progress against identified priorities and actions for future improvement.

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Annex A

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

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

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

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

04 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Patrick's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School, Sunderland, SR2 ORQ

You will know that I recently visited St Patrick's to find out how well the school is helping you to achieve the very best that you can in all your work. I thoroughly enjoyed my day in school and was very grateful to all your teachers and to you, especially, for making my job so easy. I was also very pleased to receive a number of pre-inspection questionnaires from your parents, many of whom wrote additional comments that I read and considered very carefully.

You go to a good school. All the staff care and support you very well. Your teachers plan their lessons thoroughly and make good use of the classrooms to ensure that when you work with other pupils, you are able to concentrate well and complete the tasks that you have been asked to do. I was very impressed with your behaviour in lessons and around the school. You are rightly proud of what you achieve and many of you that I spoke to were very enthusiastic about all the different activities that you do in and out of lessons.

The school is led well. Your headteacher and governors are keen to ensure that everyone continues to improve and achieves the very best that they can. I am, therefore, asking the school to ensure that when your teachers collect information about your achievements in lessons, this is shared with the governors so that they know how well you are doing, or whether some of you may need extra help with your work. This information is also very important in helping the school to share your successes regularly with your parents and to know more clearly what it wants to do to make the school even better.

I wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Brian Blake HMI