

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103439
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323827
Inspection dates	30 June –1 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Alison Cartlidge

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	206
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adrian Pembleton
Headteacher	Mary O'Friel
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Dudley Road Birmingham B18 7QW
Telephone number	0121 675 0767

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	30 June –1 July 2009
Inspection number	323827

Fax number

0121 675 2008

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Pupils come to this average-sized primary school from Ladywood and the surrounding area of Birmingham. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above average. The school has a high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is in one Reception class. An above average proportion of pupils have English as an additional language, with about 5% of the school population being at the early stages of learning to speak English. The main home language is Polish. There have been several changes in teaching staff over the last year and an acting headteacher joined the school in January 2009.

The privately run after school club was not part of this inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to standards and achievement.

Children make a good start to their education in the Reception class. In Years 1 to 6, however, pupils do not make enough progress. Consequently, by the end of Year 6, standards are generally exceptionally low, especially in English and mathematics. However, although still very low, standards are showing improvement in the current Year 6. This is the result of intensive support for individuals and groups of pupils under the direction of the acting headteacher. There have also been improvements in teaching and learning across the school in the past two terms, enabling most pupils to make adequate or better progress in lessons. However, their progress remains uneven between classes and lessons. Senior leaders are aware that, while teaching is now satisfactory overall, not enough teaching is good enough to make up for the legacy of underachievement. Nevertheless, the effective monitoring of lessons is having a positive impact and helping teachers to do a better job. Where teaching requires further improvement, it is because the pupils' wide range of needs are not being met well enough. In addition, teachers do not always use marking to give pupils enough guidance on how to improve.

Leaders have correctly identified that pupils have too few opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills by using them in other subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have not made enough progress in the past, although their achievement is now beginning to improve. Systems for tracking and monitoring the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have enabled the school to identify their needs more swiftly and to put into place strategies to help them learn more quickly; there are early signs that these are starting to bear fruit. Pupils who start school with little spoken English are given good support from Polish-speaking helpers, enabling them to learn to speak English quickly. The school has started to set more challenging targets for all pupils in English and mathematics to try to ensure that progress is more evenly good across the school. This is at a relatively early stage and does not yet involve all leaders. It is too soon for it to have had an effect on pupils' achievement.

Teachers and teaching assistants have good relationships with the pupils and manage behaviour well. Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. They have a good understanding of how to stay healthy, develop good spiritual, moral, social and cultural values, and are polite and friendly. They make a good contribution to the school community through their work as school councillors, mediators and sport leaders. Pupils are prepared adequately for the next stage of their education and later life because they gain confidence and have a willingness to work with others.

The curriculum is being rapidly developed and is satisfactory. Good additional activities such as clubs, visits and special focus weeks are especially enjoyed by the pupils. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The school works well to support pupils' pastoral needs and make all pupils feel welcome and safe at school. Academic guidance has improved and is starting to be used to show pupils how they can improve. This good practice is not yet consistent across the school and between subjects.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. While progress since the last inspection has not been good enough, the acting headteacher is ensuring that school improvement is now moving forward more quickly. Governors and other leaders have now received suitable training and so are equipped to play a larger part in monitoring provision and pupils' progress. There is a renewed commitment to raising standards; recent developments, and their positive impact on standards, are demonstrating that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

The school has good partnerships with external agencies to support the pupils' well-being. Most parents are happy with the work of the school and make positive comments such as: 'The teachers are friendly and hardworking' and 'The school has been helpful and supportive.'

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

On entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage, standards are much lower than usual, with only half the children working at the levels typically expected for this age group in literacy and numeracy. Good teaching enables children to achieve well in all areas of learning, although standards remain slightly below average by the start of Year 1. Members of staff work together well as a team and use assessment information well to identify comparative weaknesses in provision. They have recently been successful in improving the children's knowledge of letters and sounds. They promote the children's personal development and welfare well, enabling children to settle into school routines quickly and to become happy and confident learners. Consequently, children behave well and work sensibly with or without adult support. Adults plan many exciting and lively activities that help children want to learn. For example, children enjoyed hunting for missing clues in the outdoor area and waking up 'Thomas the Puppet' so that he could help them to review their learning. Members of staff use questioning well to find out what children have learned, although there are some missed opportunities for children to ask each other questions so that they are all fully involved in discussions.

Good leadership ensures the continuing development of provision and there are advanced plans to improve outdoor facilities so that they offer the same good quality opportunities as those indoors.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in literacy and numeracy by providing pupils with sufficient opportunities to use and practise their skills across the curriculum.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching by ensuring that pupils' differing needs are met consistently well and marking is used to help pupils to understand how to improve their work.
- Enable all leaders to evaluate information on provision and pupils' progress so that they can set challenging targets and tackle underachievement swiftly.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Although there have been some recent improvements, pupils' achievement, including that of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is inadequate. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage but they do not all make enough progress between Years 1 and 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are now making better progress because their needs are being identified and supported more accurately, although they have not made enough progress over time. Until recently, the school has made insufficient use of

information on pupils' progress to prevent standards from slipping. Standards by the end of Year 6 have recently been exceptionally low, although there are indications that standards have improved in the current Year 6. Signs of rising achievement over the last two terms are not yet consistently evident across the school. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress in learning to speak English because they receive well targeted support from Polish-speaking members of staff.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils learn to respect the beliefs and lifestyles of a range of cultures, including those represented in the school. They know the difference between right and wrong and share prayers sensitively. They understand the importance of living healthily and are enthusiastic about taking part in various sporting activities. Pupils have a satisfactory awareness of how to stay safe, although they do not all take care to wear clothing that will protect them from the sun. Pupils move around the building and small playground sensibly.

Pupils enjoy school. They like the teachers and appreciate taking part in practical activities. However, they are not always enthusiastic about lessons, and can become passive when these are not interesting enough. Most pupils behave well and work and play together amicably. Attendance is below average; the school is taking the right steps to discourage parents from taking their children on term time holidays and to reduce lateness. Pupils contribute well to the school community by carrying out responsibilities sensibly. For example, the school council has helped choose and purchase playground equipment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers manage behaviour well and get on well with the pupils, ensuring that lessons are calm and pupils get on with their work. Members of staff are successful in encouraging pupils to cooperate with each other in pairs and small groups. Teachers use resources such as the interactive whiteboards effectively to hold pupils' attention and to introduce new skills. A good number of recently trained teaching assistants give good support in lessons, often working with pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to ensure that their needs are being met more fully. Teachers share the purpose of each lesson with the pupils and plan lessons in detail. However, they do not always pitch work at the right level for all so that the pace of learning drops for some pupils. Teachers mark pupils' work frequently, and have started to give clear guidance by identifying how pupils could improve. This developing good practice is not yet consistent across all subjects or classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum includes a good range of clubs and other activities that support pupils' personal development well. A number of sporting activities contribute to pupils' healthy lifestyles and to their enjoyment of school. In the last two terms, the school has started to make more links between subjects so that learning is more purposeful and interesting. Leaders are aware that there are too few opportunities for pupils to strengthen pupils' literacy and numeracy skills by using them in other subjects. Good provision is made for pupils with limited spoken English.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school works well to support pupils' personal development and well-being. At the time of the inspection, safeguarding arrangements were fully in place and the school works closely with parents and outside agencies to safeguard pupils' well-being. As a result, pupils feel safe in this friendly and welcoming school. Pupils say that they know what to do if they have a worry and are rightly confident that concerns will be dealt with quickly.

Assessment procedures are satisfactory and have improved significantly in the last two terms. The checking of pupils' progress over time has been strengthened and pupils are now given clear targets. However, teachers do not always use assessment information well enough to plan the next stage of learning for all pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified more quickly than in the past and are now given improved levels of support, although their progress remains patchy.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The acting headteacher has provided the necessary impetus to help the school to reverse the downward trend in standards. She is ensuring that governors and other leaders are trained to enable them to be more accountable for the school's work. There is a shared commitment towards increasing pupils' progress and early indications are that the decline has been halted and progress is beginning to pick up. The school's systems for self-evaluation are satisfactory. Leaders have a realistic view of school effectiveness and know what they should do next. Leaders have started to make targets more challenging so that underachievement can be eradicated more quickly. Senior leaders are monitoring teaching and learning with greater rigour and there is evidence that teachers are heeding the advice they have been given. Governors are well informed. They have been supportive during a time of change and have clear plans to increase their involvement in maintaining standards.

The school ensures that all pupils at the school are given the same opportunities and feel free from discrimination. The school's contribution towards community cohesion is satisfactory and plans for future development are being finalised.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	4

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
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	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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?	Yes

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

2 July 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Birmingham B18 7QW

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for sharing your work with us. The points below are about what we found out about your school. Here are some points about your school:

- You make good progress in the Reception class but do not always learn quickly enough between Years 1 and 6.
- You behave well and are good at taking responsibility.
- Teachers are caring and work hard to help you learn interesting things.
- You study a range of topics, and particularly enjoy the practical activities planned by teachers.
- The adults in the school care for you well and help you when you are finding life difficult.
- Your headteacher and other leaders know how to make your school better.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- Help you to do better in literacy and numeracy by giving you plenty of chances to practise your skills in other subjects.
- Make sure that teachers always give you work that is just right for you and show you what you need to do to make your work better.
- Help all teachers to check that you are learning quickly, and set you harder targets to aim for.

How you can help your teachers:

- Continue to behave well and make sure you come to school on time.

We thoroughly enjoyed talking with you about your work and watching you learn. We enjoyed hearing your cheerful singing and wish you well for the future.

■ Yours faithfully

Alison Cartlidge

Lead inspector