

St Pius X RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111718
Local Authority	Middlesbrough
Inspection number	325443
Inspection dates	24–25 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Carol Gater

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	212
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	Mrs Vivienne Flynn
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Percival
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Amersham Road Park End Middlesbrough TS3 7HD
Telephone number	01642 314453
Fax number	01642 287287

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized voluntary aided Catholic primary school that serves an area with significant social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is much higher than average. The large majority of pupils are from White British families and a small number are from minority ethnic groups. The number of pupils learning English as an additional language is lower than that found nationally. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is made for children of Nursery and Reception age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. The personal development of pupils is outstanding. The strong leadership of the headteacher has brought about many improvements that are appreciated by pupils, parents, staff and governors. Parents feel strongly that the school provides 'a secure and caring environment' and that it 'puts pupils first'. The school is welcoming and a recent development offers parents the opportunity to share the computer facilities in the new library.

Pupils achieve well because of effective teaching and a good curriculum. Since the last inspection, a whole-school tracking system has been implemented. This has allowed staff to use assessment data to ensure that work is well matched to the needs and interests of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the more able. As a result, they make good progress. Children start school with levels of experience and skill much lower than is typical for their age. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards are still slightly below average but, by the time pupils leave the school in Year 6, standards are broadly average in English and mathematics. They are above average in science because of a clear emphasis on investigative science. At present, the school does not fully evaluate actions taken to narrow the gap between the attainment of boys and girls in English and mathematics.

Relationships are good and, in this strong, faith environment, all individuals are valued. As a result, pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and the school offers opportunities in the curriculum to develop these attributes. Through good care and support, even the most vulnerable pupils gain confidence in their abilities and talents. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together to ensure that this happens. Pupils have a very good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy. They enjoy taking on responsibilities and contribute well to the community. A current project that involves growing vegetables links health, business and environmental education. There are opportunities to work with outside agencies and these enhance pupils' understanding of the world.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher sets a clear direction and the new leadership team is enthusiastic and dedicated to making further improvements. Because of this commitment, the good focus on key priorities and the recent improvements in standards, the school has a good capacity to improve. Governance is good. Funding is effectively used to support pupils' personal and academic development and, as such, the school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The quality of provision is good. Most children enter Nursery with skills well below those expected for their age, especially in their personal development, early literacy skills and mathematical understanding. A considerable number have speech and language difficulties. Children make good progress because of good teaching, sensitive support and the quality of adult-to-child interaction. However, by the end of Reception, standards in all areas of learning are still below average. Assessment is used effectively to plan appropriate activities to match the stages of children's development. The introduction of a new and systematic sounds and letters programme is having a positive impact on reading and writing. Children enjoy learning and develop new skills in an attractive environment where resources are accessible. For example, they create pictures using computer programs. Children learn to share and make choices.

Stimulating role-play areas encourage speech development and writing opportunities are planned across all areas. Activities which are led by adults have a clear learning focus. However, the learning in activities where children choose for themselves is less strong. This limits the scope for independent learning. Children have regular opportunities to play and learn outdoors and the school is aware of the need to further enhance such opportunities. Adults plan meaningful learning through topics and visits; for example, to the seaside. This extends children's experiences of the world outside. Children are safe and secure and welfare requirements are met. Parents are welcomed daily and are very positive about the provision. Leadership and management are good. Although the Early Years Foundation Stage leader is new to her post, she has evaluated provision and, with the strong support of the entire team, has brought about significant improvements during the past year. The team has a clear vision for future developments.

What the school should do to improve further

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, ensure that children's free-choice activities provide more opportunities for independent learning.
- Ensure that monitoring evaluates actions taken to narrow the gap between the attainments of boys and girls in English and mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are in line with the national average and achievement is good. Pupils enter Year 1 with standards that are below expected levels. Because of the consistency of good teaching in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, all pupils make good progress and most leave Year 6 with standards that are broadly average. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do particularly well because of the good support they receive. A focus on writing has helped boys to make better progress.

Over the last three years, standards have improved and current data show that this trend is continuing. In 2008, at the end of Key Stage 1, girls performed better than boys in all subjects. In the 2008 Key Stage 2 national tests boys did better than girls in mathematics and science. The school is aware of these differences but has not yet fully addressed the issue of narrowing the gaps between the attainments of boys and girls. The school has worked hard to challenge more able pupils and this year more pupils than predicted reached the higher levels in both English and mathematics. Overall progress in science and in information and communication technology (ICT) is good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Pupils are polite, friendly and well mannered. They have time each day for quiet reflection. Behaviour, in and around the school, is excellent. Pupils feel safe and happy because they say, 'The school is a lovely healthy school and a good community'. They enjoy coming to school because lessons are fun and they like the balance between academic work and physical exercise. They understand the positive effects of exercise on the body and the importance of healthy food. Attendance is average and improving. The school does a great deal to improve it; it liaises well with outside agencies and rewards good attendance. The school's parent support adviser is now helping to monitor this and her strong link with parents is having a positive

impact. The 'Beat the Bell' initiative is improving punctuality. Pupils are proud of their school and they make an excellent contribution to their own community through involvement in performances which celebrate and showcase their talents. They fully embrace the responsibilities they are given. The head boy and head girl, house captains and vice captains lead the assemblies which are delivered by different classes each week. Some pupils are trained playground buddies and peer mediators. The school council is involved in staff appointments and has successfully acquired playground markings and a new uniform. Through generous hard work, pupils raise charitable funds to help overseas developments. With average skills in literacy and numeracy and exceptional personal development, they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use assessment information well to plan activities that match pupils' needs. In most lessons there is a good level of challenge. Relationships are very good and teachers use praise effectively to boost pupils' self-esteem. Routines and school rules are clear, and expectations are high. As a result, pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and behaviour is exemplary. Activities appeal to a variety of learning styles; pupils are keen to participate and they enjoy their lessons. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to provide good support for those pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, ensuring that all make good progress. Questioning is used effectively to encourage thinking and extend learning but this is not consistent across all lessons. Good use of technology stimulates learning and pupils use opportunities planned across the curriculum to develop a good level of ICT skills. There are examples of younger children using digital cameras to make films, while older pupils confidently share their views on the local community through PowerPoint presentations.

Pupils work well together as seen in science investigations. They willingly take on roles such as 'resource managers' and 'thinkers'. The school's focus on speaking and listening skills has helped them to clearly express their opinions.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is enhanced by a good range of enrichment activities which help to extend personal and academic development. There is also a good focus on using the community to extend pupils' learning. For example, pupils have worked with the police liaison officer to make and deliver leaflets on how to improve safety in the local the area. After-school clubs are varied and many, such as football, gardening, healthy cooking and street dancing, add much to pupils' enjoyment of school as well as promoting a healthy lifestyle. Visits and visitors are well planned to provide memorable experiences. Involvement in the 'Children Challenge Industry' initiative has led to exciting developments in science as well as giving pupils an insight into the world of work. Teachers concentrate on developing pupils' basic skills as well as trying to make meaningful links between subjects. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well provided for, supported by teachers and classroom assistants on programmes that accelerate their progress. There are good links with outside agencies and opportunities for pupils to be

aware of different cultures. The new curriculum plan aims to further develop this through whole school projects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Child protection and safeguarding systems are fully in place to ensure the health and safety of pupils. Good use is made of external agencies to safeguard pupils' welfare, supporting those who are vulnerable or who have emotional difficulties. A breakfast club gives pupils a healthy start to the day. The school has very good strategies in place to improve attendance. The parent support adviser's liaison with parents is having a positive impact. The school has recently developed an effective system to track the performance of pupils. The school is now well placed to highlight the variations in attainment and progress between girls and boys, and to monitor how effectively their actions can narrow this gap. The school has developed guidelines for the marking of writing that successfully inform and involve pupils in their next steps of learning. The school is beginning to use a similar strategy for marking in mathematics. Very effective links with the local secondary school facilitate the sharing of subject expertise and the involvement of parents. This ensures a smooth transition for pupils to the next stage of their education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. There is a shared vision amongst the headteacher, leadership team and governors to provide the best personal and academic education for each pupil. Since her appointment, the headteacher has put in place systems and procedures that have successfully addressed issues from the last inspection. Subject leaders are now more focused on raising standards. The new leadership team is committed to making further improvements. They have worked well together to correctly identify the school's priorities and actions necessary for future development. There is a comprehensive monitoring plan in place. However, the school has not yet fully monitored actions taken to narrow the gap in attainment between boys and girls in English and mathematics. Resources are deployed effectively and the school has strong partnerships with the local authority, outside agencies and partner schools. Community cohesion is good. Different cultures and faiths are celebrated and pupils' knowledge is enhanced through visits and visitors. The impact is that pupils show tolerance and respect for all individuals. The new curriculum plan clearly identifies themes that will increase pupils' awareness of other communities. Governance is good. Governors are supportive, very well informed and involved in the life of the school.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

29 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Pius X RC Primary School, Middlesbrough, TS3 7HD

Thank you very much for making my colleague and me so welcome when we visited your school. We appreciated all your comments and viewpoints.

We agree with you that your school is good. Your teachers plan interesting lessons and, when they mark your work, give you good tips to improve. Because you have good attitudes and cooperate well with each other, you make good progress.

We have asked your teachers to help you do even better, particularly boys in their English and girls in their mathematics. Your Nursery and Reception teachers have worked hard to plan interesting activities both inside and outside of the classroom. We have asked them to make sure that younger children learn as much as possible from the activities they choose.

You benefit from good teaching and interesting things to do. You clearly enjoy your lessons. Many of you choose to attend after-school activities such as gardening, football, cricket and healthy cooking. The breakfast club is also popular and gives you a good start to the day. You know how to keep safe and healthy and look after your environment. You are fortunate to have such a wonderful playground with tables, a stage and a peaceful 'spiritual garden'.

We were very impressed with your excellent behaviour. You are polite and considerate. You enjoy taking on responsibilities such as being monitors, buddies and organising your own assemblies. There are also opportunities for you to learn about other cultures in your own and the wider community.

The headteacher, senior staff and governor are successful in making your school what it is. Through good care and support, all the staff help to develop your abilities and talents. I am sure you are going to enjoy this term's 'St Pius X's Got Talent' competition. The judges will have some difficult decisions to make!

Thank you once again for your help and good luck for the future.

Yours faithfully

Carol Gater

Lead inspector