



St Gregory's and St Patrick's Catholic Community School

Better
education
and care

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 112355
Local Authority Cumbria
Inspection number 289256
Inspection dates 14–15 February 2007
Reporting inspector Stephen Isherwood HMI

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

Type of School	Infant	School address	Esk Avenue
School category	Voluntary aided		Corkickle
Age range of pupils	3–7		Whitehaven
			Cumbria
			CA28 8AJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01946 852666
Number on roll	310	Fax number	01946 694310
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Audrey Parish
Date of previous school inspection	January 2003	Headteacher	Mr Anthony Dwyer

Age group	Inspection date(s)	Inspection no.
3–7	14–15 February 2007	289256

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is situated close to the centre of Whitehaven and serves an area of mixed housing. It is larger than most infant schools. Pupils are drawn from a wide range of social backgrounds and all are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The number of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. A care club operates from the school premises both before and after school. The facilities are managed by the governing body and are subject to a separate inspection which will be available on the Ofsted website.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'My son feels cared for, protected and loved, which goes a long way in helping his confidence to learn.' This sentiment, expressed by one parent and echoed overwhelmingly by other parents is the essence of what makes St Gregory's and St Patrick's a good school with some outstanding features. Pupils reach high standards and achieve well. Their personal development is outstanding. This is because of good teaching, an excellent curriculum and high levels of care and support. Pupils enjoy coming to school, feel safe and behave very well. They have an excellent awareness of the importance of keeping fit and eating healthily through the school's outstanding range of activities and opportunities. The high quality relationships between staff, pupils, parents and governors are the hallmark of the school and reflect the strong Christian ethos that prevails. This is a bright, vibrant school at the heart of the community that extends a warm welcome to everyone who walks through the door. There are excellent partnerships with other schools and agencies. High quality displays on walls and in classrooms are engaging. Pupils' achievements are celebrated with care and pride.

The school places great emphasis on developing pupils' awareness of protecting the local environment, through conservation and recycling. Pupils are actively involved in monitoring energy consumption through the school's own wind turbine and solar panels. With such an enthusiastic approach to all things 'green', the school leads the way as an 'Eco' school. As a consequence, pupils have an excellent understanding of how they can make a positive contribution to the local community by making a difference to the environment.

Under the strong leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, previous strengths have been maintained and the school is set on an upward trend in performance. Children make good progress from the moment they enter the Nursery. This is because of the strong teaching in the early years where activities are well planned to capture the interest and enthusiasm of all learners. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress because of the high quality support they receive. By Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are exceptionally high. Teaching in other classes is often good and outstanding. However, it is weaker in Year 1, where expectations and challenge could be higher, resulting in pupils making slower progress than at other stages.

The school is not complacent and has a strong appetite for change. Despite strengths in management, senior leaders have correctly identified that there is a lack of consistency in checking and rectifying weaknesses in teaching, which is holding back the rate of achievement for some pupils. However, the school has made good progress since the last inspection and has good capacity to improve further. It provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of teaching and progress in Year 1 by adding more challenge and interest to lessons.
- Establish more frequent and rigorous checks on the quality of teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are very high and have been consistently high for several years. This represents good achievement. However, pupils achieve less successfully in Year 1 where progress is satisfactory.

When children first enter the school their attainment is in line with what is typical for pupils of this age. The strong provision in the Nursery and Foundation Stage means that they get off to a really good start and make good gains in their learning. By the beginning of Year 1 they reach and frequently exceed the nationally expected levels for their age.

Work in lessons and pupils' books confirms that progress in Year 1 is satisfactory but pupils lose some ground compared to the promise they showed in Reception. Progress picks up as the quality of teaching improves and by the end of Year 2 standards are consistently high in reading, writing and mathematics. High numbers of pupils reach the standard expected for 7 year olds and a good proportion attain above this level.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve exceptionally well in relation to their capabilities. Their achievement reflects one of the key strengths of the school. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls. All do equally well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding and contribute significantly to the progress pupils make. They enjoy coming to school, display first-rate attitudes to learning and behave very well. They have excellent spiritual, moral and social awareness. Their cultural development is good and pupils have a strong understanding of their own cultural heritage and their place in the wider world.

Pupils have an excellent understanding how to keep themselves healthy and fit, for example, by choosing healthy snacks, eating healthy meals and by participating in a wide range of sporting and physical activities. The school council members are enthusiastic ambassadors for the school, take their responsibilities very seriously and make a positive difference to school life. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the wider community through their focus on conservation and recycling issues, by their fundraising for local charities, and by developing strong links with families in other countries. The pupils' awareness of environmental issues is exceptionally well developed. Some pupils were involved in the application to site a wind turbine in the school grounds and as a group; they conscientiously monitor the school's energy consumption.

Independence is very effectively encouraged throughout school and pupils are given many opportunities to take responsibility for their learning. High levels of basic skills and opportunities to work together contribute significantly to their future economic well being. Pupils enjoy school and their attendance is above average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and this explains why overall progress is good. However, it is not consistent in Year 1 where in some classes, pupils are not sufficiently challenged and their learning slows. Particular strengths in teaching are when activities build briskly on prior knowledge and the teaching methods used match the aims of the lesson. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very positive and encourage pupils to learn. Generally, lesson activities are interesting, well planned and the school is challenging those who are talented so that they achieve as well as they can. Supporting adults ensure that work is well-matched to the capabilities of those who are vulnerable or who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This means that these pupils make excellent progress. Where teaching was outstanding, pupils were engrossed in their work, teachers had very high expectations of what pupils could achieve and the interesting content resulted in lessons proceeding at a brisk pace.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding, and ensures all pupils have equal access. It is very relevant to the needs of all pupils and prepares them exceptionally well for the next phase of their education. The curriculum is enriched well through the provision of examples of high quality environmental awareness; the school gets much of its power from a wind turbine in the school field and a significant proportion of its hot water from solar panels on the roof. These ventures are monitored closely by the pupils. As a result, their economic awareness is particularly strong. The curriculum is responding positively to local needs by establishing the school as a local facility, placing it at the hub of the community. All pupils enjoy the extensive programme of enrichment that the school provides through its focus on providing excellent opportunities to learn through involvement in the Arts. There is a very good range of after school clubs and activities, particularly in dance and drama.

High standards in literacy are supported especially well by opportunities being given for pupils to write for a range of purpose, across other subjects. Easy access to computers ensures that pupils have a good awareness of the use of modern technology for learning. Pupils acquire an exceptionally strong understanding of safety issues and the importance of healthy living.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's provision for pupils' care guidance and support is good with some outstanding features. Pupils are exceptionally well cared for and supported from the moment they start school. As a result they make good progress in their learning. Careful attention is paid to child protection and health and safety issues.

Nursery children have good induction procedures and parents are fully involved in the transition from school to home. Good liaison between all school staff ensures that pupils' social development is tracked very effectively. Consequently, staff are able to respond immediately to any concerns. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are quickly identified and supported well through the excellent links which are established with outside agencies. However, there is some inconsistency in the school's procedures for checking on teaching and learning, which leads to some pupils in Year 1 making slower progress than at other stages.

Parents remark strongly on the special caring atmosphere and the strong Christian ethos that prevails. All staff consistently praise pupils, encourage independence and raise pupils' self-esteem.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good, an improvement on the school's judgement of satisfactory. The high standards identified at the time of the last inspection have been maintained and improved. This is because of the strong leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, who work with energy and determination to push the school forward. As a consequence, the school is set on an upward trend in performance. Since the time of the last inspection, they have successfully led the drive to raise standards further in mathematics and in reading. This has been achieved by a strong emphasis on teamwork and providing high levels of support for all pupils. As a result, there is a fervent commitment to creating a positive learning environment where every child is exceptionally well cared for and is encouraged to grow in confidence and self-esteem.

The school's view of its strengths and areas for improvement is largely accurate. However, a lack of urgency and consistency by subject leaders in identifying weaknesses in teaching and learning are holding back the rate of achievement for some pupils.

The governing body plays an important part in shaping the school's direction. It has a good understanding of its role and responsibilities and is increasingly aware about what is happening in school. Its members are extremely committed and offer good support and challenge to the school. As a consequence and along with its other strengths, the school is well placed to improve still further.

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