

St Gregory's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134667
Local authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	381712
Inspection dates	9–10 January 2012
Lead inspector	Judith Straw

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	357
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Middleton-Hill
Executive Headteacher	Margaret Yates
Date of previous school inspection	April 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Judith Straw
Sheila Loughlin
Jean Tarry

Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days notice. Inspectors observed 21 lessons taught by 14 teachers. They held meetings with groups of pupils, staff, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority, and had informal conversations with parents and carers bringing their children to school. They listened to individual pupils reading and talked with pupils about their work. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at data the school had collected on pupils' progress, the safeguarding procedures, school improvement plans, records of the school's monitoring and review processes and the work in pupils' books. They considered the 129 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as analysing questionnaires from pupils and staff.

Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average-size primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a broadly average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is average. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and those with disabilities are below average. The school has been above government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress, for the last three years.

In September 2010, the school formed a collaboration with another local Catholic primary school and the executive headteacher manages both schools.

The school holds a number of awards including Healthy School status, the Activemark, Eco bronze, Green Tree gold, International School, intermediate level, the quality in Study Support mark, Artsmark silver and School Council gold.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key Findings

- This is a good school. Pupils' attainment has been above average and rising for the last three years. Parents and carers are overwhelming positive about the school. Pupils in all key stages achieve well. The school has recognised that while attainment in English is above average, progress is slower than in mathematics, especially in writing, and has taken prompt action to address this so that the progress of all pupils is accelerating.
- Teaching is consistently good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, with a steadily increasing proportion of outstanding teaching. The school provides strong support in lessons for pupils with special educational needs and those with disabilities, so that these pupils are able to make good progress. The impact of the curriculum on pupil outcomes is outstanding because of the strong focus on core skills but not at the expense of creativity, enrichment and enjoyment.
- Doing all that it can to care for, support and guide its pupils is at the heart of St Gregory's work. As a result pupils feel entirely safe, their behaviour is excellent and their attitudes to learning are positive. The work of the learning mentors is crucial and highly effective in supporting children and families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Parents and carers are unanimous that their children are safe and thrive in this supportive environment.
- The executive headteacher's drive and determination, and her vision to provide the best education possible for all pupils, have been key factors in the school's progress. All the staff and members of the governing body share this vision and ambition so that teaching has improved, pupils' achievement has been enhanced, attendance is above average and the emphasis on improving the outcomes for children is unrelenting.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In writing, raise attainment further and accelerate progress, by embedding strategies already identified by the school, to ensure that:
 - pupils have weekly opportunities for extended writing
 - pupils have more opportunities to write from direct experiences and to write for a purpose
 - teachers take responsibility for ensuring the quality of writing in other subjects areas
 - teachers devise more strategies to engage pupils, particularly boys, in writing.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities broadly in line with those expected for their age, except in communication, language and literacy development where they are below expectations. Children make good progress in this key stage and exceed expectations for their age, especially in personal and social development and calculation, by the time they enter Year 1. Children behave very well, are keen to explore and learn new things and work and play very well together. The school has currently identified that summer born children are underperforming in writing and so has additional strategies in place to support these children.

Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 is above average and has risen in each of the last three years. In reading, nearly every child achieves the expected level for their age. In lessons, pupils are responsive and work well independently and in groups. All pupils achieve well but more girls are reaching higher levels of attainment than boys. Pupils with special educational needs and those with disabilities, those who speak English as an additional language and those known to be eligible to receive free school meals, all achieve well.

In Key Stage 2, pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and concentrate well in class. Attainment by the end of Year 6 is above average in both English and mathematics, but by a much greater margin in mathematics. All groups of pupils achieve better in mathematics than in English. Both girls' and boys' attainment is above average in reading by the end of Year 6, but girls by a much greater margin. The school has a range of strategies in place to reduce the gap between girls' and boys' performance. Any pupil whom the school perceives to be underachieving receives a special 'raising-attainment' plan and additional support. As a result of their positive attitudes to learning and the efforts made by the school to support all pupils, progress is good overall and for an increasing proportion of pupils it is outstanding.

The vast majority of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire, and all those spoken to during the inspection, agreed that their children were well-taught, making good progress and achieving well. Inspection evidence supports this view.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is consistently good and a steadily increasing proportion of teaching is outstanding. In all lessons, clear learning objectives are set so that pupils understand what they are going to do and how they will know if they have succeeded. Teachers' enthusiasm is infectious and they quickly establish very positive working relationships with pupils. Teaching assistants are clear about their role and make valuable contributions to lessons and to supporting different groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with disabilities.

In lessons observed during the inspection, teachers' expert subject knowledge and shrewd planning resulted in fast-paced lessons, which thoroughly engaged the pupils so that they were highly motivated to succeed in a spirit of friendly competition. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 were vying with each other to write the most skilful, powerful sentences. In Year 3, pupils were researching ancient Roman buildings, and being archaeologists searching for artefacts in a huge tank of sand. In Year 4, pupils used their map-reading skills and powers of deduction to work out the safest place to establish ancient settlements. Slightly less successful lessons tended to have a slower pace, with work not quite as well matched to pupils' different abilities. These lessons were very much in the minority. The steady rise in attainment across the school provides further confirmation that teaching is consistently good.

Teachers' use of the excellent planned curriculum meets pupils' needs and matches their interests. It makes a strong contribution to both pupils' enjoyment and to their good progress in acquiring key skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. It is recognised that pupils, particularly boys, enjoy writing far more when it is related to actual personal experiences. The school is increasingly providing these opportunities, which is helping to narrow the gap in attainment in this subject between boys and girls. The creative aspects of the curriculum are evident in displays of pupils' work and their interest in the world around them. Teachers promote pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by helping them to be curious, independent learners, with good powers of empathy so that they readily understand and enjoy poetry, music, sports and the arts.

The quality of marking is consistently good across both key stages and all teachers ensure pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils have many opportunities to assess their own work before their teacher does. All pupils have targets and understand how they will reach them. The evidence gathered from a review of pupils' books showed that most pupils take pride in their work, respond to high expectations for the presentation of their work and follow up comments and advice given by teachers in marking. The school acknowledges that sometimes in other subjects, the correction of pupils' spelling and grammar is less rigorous than it is in English and is taking steps to remedy this.

The vast majority of parents and carers agree that their children are well taught and that the school meets their children's particular needs. Inspectors endorse this view.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is typically exemplary. Pupils are keen to meet visitors, are intensely proud of their school and are kind and considerate to each other and to adults. Older pupils enjoy caring for the younger ones and many train to act as peer mediators in helping to negotiate in the small disputes that can occur at play times. Pupils are adamant that there is little or no bullying and that any issues are quickly sorted out by teachers or peer mediators. The pupils said that racism is not tolerated and instances of it are very rare. Pupils are developing into well-informed young citizens and have a clear understanding of their local and wider communities. The school's systematic and well-considered approach to behaviour management ensures that any misdemeanours are dealt with promptly. High expectations for good behaviour are well-embedded so that there is rarely any disruption or slowing of pace in lessons to disrupt learning.

The role of the learning mentor is pivotal in ensuring that children with emotional, behavioural or learning difficulties are nurtured and enabled to give of their best. The focus on attendance has resulted in above-average attendance, whereas in the past it was consistently below average. The school's safeguarding procedures are exemplary and ensure that all children are safe. This view is endorsed unanimously by parents and carers and matches inspection evidence.

Leadership and management

The executive headteacher and other leaders, including the leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage have galvanised the staff into a highly ambitious and effective team. Improvements are evident in all areas. Teaching has been greatly improved because senior leaders lead by example. Training, mentoring and support are provided and some highly effective new teachers have been appointed. Good is not enough for the current staff team: they share a commitment to be outstanding. The collaboration with another school has provided many more opportunities for joint staff training, mutual support and the development of leadership skills and sharing expertise. The executive headteacher has established robust systems for ensuring the quality of provision and maintaining and improving high standards in both schools. The focus is continually on ensuring that children achieve as well as they can, setting high expectations and raising attainment. As a result of highly effective leadership, both the curriculum and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding.

Since the last inspection, the school has developed its system for tracking pupils' progress. Twice in each term pupils' progress is measured and interventions to raise achievement are put in place for any pupils perceived to be falling behind. All the weaknesses at the last inspection have been eliminated. Attainment in mathematics is now high, and a focus on the higher-attaining pupils has resulted in more of them gaining Level 5. The school has moved closer to becoming outstanding and has excellent capacity to achieve this.

The school has an excellent partnership with parents and carers. Support starts in the summer even before children join the Nursery, with the 'Gregory Bear's Club', which provides an introduction programme. The parent support coordinator works with the learning mentor to devise training programmes for parents and carers, which help them to support their children's education. Parents and carers speak with genuine appreciation about this aspect of the school's work.

Members of the governing body are involved in finding out about the school at first-hand. They are well-informed, committed and enthusiastic, and prepared to challenge the school where necessary. They monitor all aspects of the school's work and ensure that the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination as effectively as possible. They regularly monitor and verify the excellent safeguarding arrangements, visit lessons and meet parents and carers.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



11 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Gregory's Catholic Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST3 2QN

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited you in school this week. We would especially like to thank those pupils who talked to us about St Gregory's, those who read to us and the school council who shared a meeting with us. You were excellent ambassadors for your school.

We have judged that yours is a good school. Here are some of the things that helped us make our decision.

- You are achieving better than pupils in many other schools.
- You make good progress because you have good teaching.
- Your behaviour is outstanding and that means everyone can enjoy their time in school and feel very safe.
- You have excellent attitudes to learning, are curious about the world around you and are interested in other people.
- Your school leaders do an excellent job and that is why the school has improved so well.

Your reading, writing and mathematics are all improving but the school wants you to do even better in writing. We have also seen that boys are not doing quite as well as girls. To help all of you improve even further, we have asked the school to really concentrate on writing by making sure that you do some extended writing every week; that you have lots of opportunities to write from direct experiences and that teachers always check your spelling and grammar in your writing in other subjects as well as they do in English.

You can play your part by continuing to work hard and enjoy your learning.

Yours sincerely

Judith Straw
Lead inspector

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