

# St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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|                                |                    |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 124373             |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Staffordshire      |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 380876             |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 18–19 January 2012 |
| <b>Lead inspector</b>          | Derek Aitken       |

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

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|--|---|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary   |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Voluntary aided                                   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 4–11  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed   |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 365   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                                |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | John Taggart                                      |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | John Hayes  |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 11 July 2007                                      |
| <b>School address</b>                      | Wilnecote Lane<br>Belgrave<br>Tamworth<br>B77 2LF |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01827 475045                                      |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | 01827 475045                                      |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | office@st-gabriels.staffs.sch.uk                  |

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|---------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Age group</b>          | 4–11               |
| <b>Inspection date(s)</b> | 18–19 January 2012 |
| <b>Inspection number</b>  | 380876             |



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## Introduction

### Inspection team

|                 |                      |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| Derek Aitken    | Additional inspector |
| Mary Hughes     | Additional inspector |
| Richard Kentish | Additional inspector |

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 17 lessons and saw 15 teachers. A scrutiny of pupils' work in mathematics was carried out. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. Informal discussions were held with parents and carers on the playground and during workshops in the school hall. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at documents, including policies and procedures relating to the safeguarding of pupils, self-evaluation records and assessment information. The inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires from 223 parents and carers, 94 pupils and 28 staff.

## Information about the school

St Gabriel's Catholic Primary is larger than the average sized primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly below average. The percentage of pupils with disabilities and special educational needs is broadly average. The school provides for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage through two Reception classes.

The school meets the current government floor standard.

The school has Healthy Schools status and its other awards include Artsmark Gold.

A pre-school setting – St Gabriel's Early Years Group - operates on the school site. This is independently managed and subject to a separate inspection.

**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

|                                       |          |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>          | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Achievement of pupils</b>          | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Quality of teaching</b>            | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b> | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Leadership and management</b>      | <b>2</b> |

## Key findings

- This is a good school which has made improvements in key areas of its work since the last inspection. One of its significant strengths is the highly positive and welcoming environment that it provides, which enables pupils to feel very safe and highly valued.
- Relationships with parents and carers are outstanding.
- Excellent strategies have been developed to raise pupils' rates of attendance.
- Children's attainment on entry to Reception is broadly in line with national expectations but their literacy skills are often lower than those expected. They make good, sustained progress, especially in writing. This enables pupils to leave the school at the end of Year 6 with attainment that is above the national averages. Progress is, however, slightly better in English than in mathematics. Some pupils lack confidence in applying their basic mathematical skills to solve problems and there are fewer opportunities for pupils to practise their numeracy skills in other subjects.
- Teaching is good overall with some outstanding elements. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and very effective behaviour management creates a respectful and highly purposeful climate for learning. Some practice is satisfactory. On these occasions, the pace of lessons is pedestrian and activities are not planned sharply enough to challenge pupils to the full.
- Pupils behave well around the school and in the playground. Their behaviour in lessons is good and sometimes excellent. Pupils are eager to help each other and collaborate very well, for example in paired partner routines. Pupils are exceptionally polite and courteous to visitors.
- Senior leaders have strong aspirations for pupils' progress and well-being. Pupils' achievements are carefully analysed and actions are taken rapidly to tackle any areas of comparative weakness. Leaders have made expert use of external advice to sharpen school self-evaluation and steer school improvement.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics by:
  - further developing opportunities for pupils to acquire greater self-confidence in using and applying their mathematical skills in problem-solving tasks
  - creating better opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their numeracy skills in other subjects.
  
- Further improve the quality of teaching by:
  - ensuring that all lessons move at a brisk pace and are precisely planned to provide a consistently high level of challenging work for pupils.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Inspection evidence supports the view of parents and carers that their children achieve well. Boys and girls in the Reception classes make equally good progress in all areas of learning and quickly close the gaps in their literacy skills. Children make good use of their 'snowdome' role-playing area to practise their writing skills and acquire familiarity in counting money accurately. Pupils' attainment when they join Year 1 has recently risen and is now slightly above average. Inspection evidence confirms that all groups of pupils make good progress thereafter in English, mathematics and science and achieve their challenging targets. Pupils also achieve well in other subjects, most notably music and art, where they benefit from good opportunities to build on their motor and observational skills. By the end of Year 2 pupils' attainment in reading is average. More-able pupils read confidently and fluently, while less-able pupils demonstrate correct techniques in sounding out unfamiliar words. By the end of Year 6 pupils' attainment in reading is above average. Pupils make particularly good progress in the development of their writing skills. Older pupils, in particular, respond well to challenging tasks and persevere when faced with difficulties. However, on a few occasions, some younger pupils are not so resilient when faced with less familiar tasks, problem-solving questions or data-handling exercises, for example, in mathematics, and this slows their progress in lessons.

Pupils benefit from well-planned opportunities to extend their writing skills and spiritual, moral, social and cultural qualities in other subjects and during theme days. Opportunities for pupils to practise their numeracy skills are less well developed. Pupils with disabilities and pupils with special educational needs are challenged well and also make good progress. For example, Year 6 pupils showed that they could manipulate fraction rules accurately to solve basic tens and units calculations. Pupils' above-average levels of attainment and attendance and good punctuality promote their achievement and prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

### Quality of teaching

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Parents and carers rightly believe that pupils are taught well and their children fully agree. Parents and carers comment that staff 'are always ready to go that extra mile' to support pupils' learning. Reception teachers question children well to prompt them to think and move their learning on. Teachers' good expectations for pupils' progress and behaviour promote very secure classroom relationships and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers use a suitably varied range of techniques and resources, including the interactive whiteboard to introduce and reinforce concepts. Teachers' planning is clear and, for the most part, well thought out to provide opportunities to extend pupils' learning. The best lessons are characterised by sharply timed, challenging activities and well targeted, precise questioning, which quicken pupils' responsiveness and enhance their self-belief and enjoyment of learning. In an outstanding Year 6 lesson, for example, the class teacher systematically increased the challenge of activities for less-able pupils through sharing structured 'steps to success' cards linked to pupils' levels and targets. Teachers make good use of mini-whiteboards to hold pupils' attention, check up on their understanding, remove misconceptions and ensure no one gets left behind. Lesson planning is matched well to the needs of pupils of different abilities. Pupils with disabilities and pupils with special educational needs are very effectively supported by teaching assistants. On a few occasions, teaching is only satisfactory, for example when pupils spend too long on one activity, which breaks their attention span; or when activities and resources are not designed well enough to provide real challenge. Teachers' marking provides pupils with regular opportunities to reflect on their work. Pupils sometimes act on this useful advice but this is not a consistent feature of their approach to learning.

**Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils' hardworking approach, pride in their work and good attitudes towards their learning are important factors in their enjoyment of school and in their good achievement. From the moment of their arrival in Reception, children's behaviour is outstanding and their personal development is good. Children are very safe and well cared for in the stimulating classrooms and their achievement benefits from recent improvements to the outdoor area. As they progress through the school pupils set consistent standards for themselves and respond promptly to the staff's guidance and expectations, as evidenced by the very rare incidence of fixed-term exclusions in the school's records. A very large majority of pupils work extremely effectively, particularly when working on shared tasks. On a few occasions some pupils are passive or lack self-confidence and need to be encouraged to participate fully. Pupils' good behaviour and safety are underpinned by the exceptionally strong ties which bind the school community together. Pupils have diverse opportunities to contribute to school life, for example as councillors, playground leaders and peer supporters. They develop self-esteem, for example through participation in well-regarded choir performances and during hymn practice. Pupils conduct themselves well around school and in lessons. Pupils' questionnaires and comments indicate that they feel exceptionally safe in school. Pupils say that bullying is uncommon and that, if it happens, it is swiftly dealt with. They add that pupils behave well outside lessons

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and that it is only very rarely that lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour. Parents and carers hold the school on these and other matters in exceptional regard and many of their comments in response to the questionnaire are highly appreciative of the quality of pastoral support provided by the staff. These very positive views are fully confirmed by inspection evidence. Pupils have a good understanding of factors which might endanger their personal safety but say that on a few occasions pupils ignore instructions, for example not to run on icy ground. They know what constitutes a healthy diet and their enjoyment of physical exercise through a broad range of after-school activities is reflected in St Gabriel's Healthy Schools Award. Over the last four terms the school's attendance rate has risen by two per cent and is now above average.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior leaders work determinedly and energetically to secure school improvement. Since the last inspection they have developed provision in Reception to enhance learning experiences for children. They have successfully implemented a range of measures to improve pupils' writing skills, with the result that in Year 6 pupils' achievement at level 4 is now marginally higher in writing than in reading or mathematics. Decisive actions were taken in September 2011 after the disappointing decline last year in Key Stage 2 pupils' achievement in mathematics. Pupils are now making good progress again in the subject but the changes are not yet fully embedded in the school's work. Leaders have worked purposefully to enable parents and carers to participate in the continuous drive to raise pupils' achievement. One cornerstone of this is the series of focused pupil/parent workshops which are exceptionally well attended and enjoyed by all participants. Another is the highly effective contribution made by the attendance and welfare officer in boosting pupils' attendance and punctuality and in enlisting the support of hard-to-reach parents and carers in pursuit of the school's aims.

Leaders are self-critical and act firmly on the recommendations of external, specialist advice to address weaknesses. This has enabled them to construct an impressive short-term school development plan to steer improvement. They have sought to secure consistency in the quality of teaching, for example through coaching, pairing arrangements, increased opportunities for joint planning and the implementation of a common marking policy. These arrangements are working well, but some variation in the quality of teaching remains. The curriculum is good and meets pupils' needs well. Appropriate interventions are in place, which support disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs well, but these are further advanced in literacy than numeracy. Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good, with particular strengths in the first three elements. Pupils benefit from stimulating opportunities in art and music to extend their cultural horizons. Their understanding of different communities in the United Kingdom is sound. The governing body provides leaders with good support and challenge and works successfully with staff to enhance provision. Consequently, the school has a good capacity for further improvement. All leaders promote equality and tackle discrimination well, as reflected in good outcomes for all groups of pupils. The school's arrangements for

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safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.



## 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](http://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.**



20 January 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School, Tamworth, B77 2LF**

I would like to thank you for your help when the inspection team visited your school recently and for sharing your views with us. Yours is a good school and the following reasons are particularly important in explaining why it is successful.

- Children get off to a good start in Reception.
- You are taught well and this helps you to reach above-average levels of attainment by the end of Year 6. You achieve well, especially in writing.
- You told us you feel exceptionally safe and highly valued by the caring staff. You play your part by behaving well and making sure everyone gets on really well with each other.
- The school is well led by the senior leaders who have built up excellent relationship with your parents and carers. Leaders are determined that you learn well and make good use of specialist advice to support your good progress.

We have asked the staff to do the following things to help you achieve even better.

- Help you gain more self-confidence in using your mathematical skills to solve problems and give you more chances to practise your numeracy skills in other subjects.
- Share the very best practice in teaching and learning across the school.

You can help by continuing to work hard and enjoy your learning. It is also important that you do your best to keep up your improved rates of attendance.

Yours sincerely

Derek Aitken  
Lead inspector

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