

St Gregory's RC Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108716
Local authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	377805
Inspection dates	28–29 February 2012
Lead inspector	Frank Cain

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Winnie Horwood
Headteacher	Ken Smithson
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2007
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Introduction

Inspection team

Frank Cain
Sheila Mawer

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited 14 lessons or parts of lessons taught by eight different teachers and they also looked at pupils' work. They listened to pupils read and talked to them about how much reading they do. Discussions took place with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. The 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 those relating to safeguarding, the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation records, minutes of governing body meetings and the school's own assessment data. The inspectors analysed questionnaires from pupils and staff, as well as those from 125 parents and carers.

Information about the school

St Gregory's Primary is an average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average at school action, while the proportion on school action plus and with a statement of special educational needs is above average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A small percentage is from minority ethnic groups. Pupil mobility in and out of the school is much lower than average. The school meets the current floor standard. The school has been awarded Activemark and Healthy Schools status.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key Findings

- St Gregory's is an outstanding school. The pupils enter nursery with skills slightly below the levels expected for their age but when they leave at the end of Year 6, their attainment is well above the national average due to outstanding teaching, highly effective leadership and a rich and vibrant curriculum. In many cases, pupils are up to two terms ahead of those elsewhere.
- Almost all pupils make excellent progress. The skills of children are quickly developed in the Early Years Foundation Stage and so they make rapid progress. By the end of Year 2, attainment is generally above the national average, and progress accelerates further in Years 3 to 6. This pattern of high achievement has been sustained over a number of years.
- Much evidence of excellent teaching was seen across the school and teaching was always at least good. Teachers' enthusiasm and excellent subject knowledge are key to motivating and engaging pupils, helped by very skilful support assistants. Teachers' planning shows that they tailor their lessons to match the needs of different abilities, but in a small number of lessons it was less successfully done and as a result, progress slowed a little. Excellent examples of marking of pupils' work were observed across the school, but there were inconsistencies between some classes in the quality of advice given on how to improve a piece of work.
- The behaviour of children is outstanding. Not a single child in their questionnaire had any concerns whatsoever about behaviour in lessons, around the school or with bullying. This helps to show that behaviour is of a consistently high standard over time. Pupils' attitudes to learning are extremely positive. They are all very keen to learn and are totally engaged in learning in class.
- The leadership and management of the school, including that of teaching and management of performance, are excellent. The headteacher's drive and vision

have had a major impact on school improvements since the previous report. Areas previously identified as weaknesses have been tackled successfully. The school has an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the rapid progress made by the vast majority of pupils is extended further by:
 - always precisely matching activities to pupils' learning needs
 - providing consistently high quality advice to pupils on how to improve their work.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Outstanding attainment and a high degree of pupils' enjoyment in learning have helped to create a very successful school. The school is well above the minimum standard expected of primary schools nationally. Children get off to an excellent start in reception and make rapid progress from their starting points. The well-organised learning environment provides children with exciting learning opportunities, allowing them to make choices and develop outstanding behaviour. Very good adult support helps to develop children's vocabulary and practise the sounds that letters make.

In lessons in Key Stage 1 and 2, pupils are enthusiastic to show what they know and understand. In every lesson they are keen to start their work. Inspirational teaching motivates pupils, making them very enthusiastic learners. This was observed, for example, in a role play exercise about refugees during the Second World War, when pupils' imaginations were fully engaged to extend their understanding of the lives of others. Almost all pupils make very good progress as they move through the school and their attainment is well above average. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs progress at a similar rate to others because of carefully targeted support. Support staff were seen to be making an exceptional contribution in a number of lessons across the school to the achievement of pupils. There is no difference in the attainment of boys and girls over time, although in 2011 boys overtook girls in Key Stage 2 tests. Pupils who show signs that they might be falling behind get speedy access to extra tuition, which helps them to improve.

Pupils' attainment in reading at the end of Year 2 is above average and at the end of Year 6 well above average. This reflects the high priority the school places on developing good literacy skills. Pupils enjoy reading and most read at home. Younger ones said that they liked reading out loud to an adult. Most pupils read confidently and the older ones varied the expression in their voices to match the meaning in the texts they were reading. On occasions, older pupils met with words they did not fully comprehend and younger pupils made good guesses indicating that teachers' high expectations sometimes led to the choice of a challenging read.

In agreement with inspectors, an overwhelming number of parents and carers indicated in the questionnaire that the school met their children's needs, that they were making very good progress and that the school helps them to support their children's learning. The pupils were also extremely positive in their understanding of how much they were learning in school.

Quality of teaching

Evidence from the inspection supports the views of the overwhelming majority of parents and carers that teaching is outstanding. Teachers use a wide range of learning opportunities to generate pupils' high levels of enthusiasm and commitment to learning. Year 1 pupils were fascinated by the mysterious handprints that were appearing in different areas of the school made by a large three-fingered monster. They spoke excitedly in the dinner queue as to what it might look like and where it might be hiding. Year 4 pupils were seen rapidly acquiring historical skills of investigation and using artefacts to find out about the Tudor ship the Mary Rose, which provided excellent opportunities for stimulating discussion.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils and regularly check pupils' learning throughout lessons. Time is used extremely well in lessons so that the pace of learning is often outstanding. The assessment and tracking of pupils' prior skills, knowledge and understanding are rigorous. Teachers use the information exceptionally well to plan and set challenging tasks, which usually match individual needs. On a very few occasions, however, activities fail to fully match pupils' learning needs. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs were seen in many lessons to be making excellent progress, helped by good resources and skilled support staff. Since the previous inspection, improvements have been made to extend pupils' knowledge of their own learning and to help them work towards clearly explained targets. Marking of work generally provides pupils with well targeted and specific advice on how to improve. Occasionally, marking gave comments that were too general.

In the vibrant curriculum, drama is used to great effect to stimulate interest and develop excitement. Specific attention is given in lessons to developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Talking partners and group work are well organised and pupils were heard taking on roles of responsibility and organising their own learning, searching for facts about elephants, for example, to write a report. Pupils are well aware of different faiths and understand the problems in less well-developed countries, such as Tanzania through their work with the charity, CAFOD. The curriculum fosters excellent cultural development, not least through the school's extremely popular annual Shakespearean production, which is used in English to write character studies as well for imaginative artwork. Pupils' social development, and their understanding about modern Britain was seen in a Year 3 class when they were observed in a role play situation about travel agents, so that pupils could better understand the work that they did. Pupils' questionnaire answers, and pupils interviewed, were extremely positive about the teaching and learning experiences they receive in school.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is impeccable. This outstanding behaviour is typical for the school, as seen in evidence such as the school behaviour log, which shows no racist incidents and very few examples of poor behaviour generally. An overwhelming majority of parents and carers say behaviour is good and most thought that the school would deal very effectively with any bullying that might occur. Pupils say that bullying of any type is unheard of and they were unanimous in stating that if it did occur it would be dealt with very well. They are well aware of the different forms that bullying could take and understand what to do to prevent it occurring, including when using computers, for example. The youngest children displayed amazing self-discipline in school. They queued sensibly for lunch chatting quietly and happily with each other with minimal staff supervision. The school is very supportive of those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, and concerns around pupils' welfare are rigorously followed up. Pupils were extremely polite to others and their attitude to their work was exemplary. All pupils worked well and the high quality of past work seen, of older pupils in particular, showed that they took a great deal of pride in what they did.

Pupils have a great deal of respect for others, in and out of lessons and make an exceptional contribution to the highly positive ethos of the school. Older pupils proudly help younger ones and act as splendid role models during lunchtime. Parents and carers who answered the inspection questionnaire were almost unanimous in their belief that their children are safe at school. All groups of pupils also said that they felt safe in the school. Attendance is well above average and has been for a considerable time. Children are consistently punctual. One parent representing parental approval for the school said that when her child came home he talked 'excitedly about his friends, teachers and experiences'.

Leadership and management

Leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, share the headteacher's highly successful drive for continual improvement. 'Good is not good enough' is a commonly used school slogan. The school has maintained significantly high levels of attainment and pupils' progress for the last three years. It has improved teaching by rigorous internal monitoring, targeted professional development and also by external advisors pinpointing areas of development. Teamwork in the school is strong and staff morale is very high. The senior team checks the school's performance rigorously. They use their excellent skills to offer constructive advice and training. The 'learning dialogues' for staff are excellent opportunities in professional development time when teachers share good practice and offer constructive advice to others. Teachers also raise whole staff awareness of current ideas in teaching on a regular basis. Leaders other than the headteacher, carry out their roles very effectively and have an important impact on improving provision and pupils' achievement. The school demonstrates a strong capacity to continue to improve in the future.

Safeguarding requirements are met. Good practice in safeguarding and child protection is evident in all areas of the school's work. Regular quality training ensures that all adults are fully up to date with how best to ensure the school is safe for

everyone. The governing body has a clear understanding of its role and its members have a good understanding of the school's strengths. The school leaders at all levels place the promotion of equality of opportunity at the heart of its work. There is no evidence of discrimination of any sort in this caring inclusive school. The school's engagement with parents and carers is outstanding. Their views are listened to and good ideas are readily adopted by the headteacher.

School leaders have ensured that the curriculum is outstanding and pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is threaded through this to give the pupils a very good start to their development. The curriculum is rich and inspiring. Pupils learn a great deal through visits to study the local coastline for example. They get the chance to experience residential visits to the Lake District as well as to Belgium. There are a wide variety of after-school activities that a number of parents and carers said were valuable. They include a popular class to learn Chinese and the culture of its people.

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.
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.



1 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Gregory's RC Voluntary Aided Primary School, South Shields NE34 6DZ

I want to thank all of you for the extremely friendly welcome that you gave us when we inspected your school. We found the time we spent talking with you, your teachers and other adults extremely enjoyable and rewarding. You go to an outstanding school. Your responses to the questionnaire and our conversations show that you agree with our findings that your school is outstanding.

You make excellent progress and reach high standards because you work hard and receive excellent teaching. You are very well prepared for the future. Your school is extremely well led and managed and all staff, including the governors, do all they can to help your learning. Almost all of you feel very safe and secure and think the school's curriculum gives you exciting learning experiences. Every single one of you said that behaviour was good.

In order to help you to do even better and to improve the school further, we have asked the school's leaders, teachers and governors to:

- make sure that all your activities are matched to what you can do all of the time
- always tell you exactly how to improve your work.

I am sure you will all want to help make your school even better by continuing to work hard and playing together well.

Yours sincerely

Frank Cain
Lead inspector

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