

St Maria Goretti Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124325
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	359635
Inspection dates	9–10 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Anthony O'Malley HMI

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	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ray Chadwick
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Yates
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Aylesbury Road Bucknall, Stoke-on-Trent Staffordshire ST2 0LY
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. Fourteen lessons and eight teachers were observed. Discussions were held with staff, pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, the School Improvement Partner and parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of evidence including assessment and monitoring information, attendance data and pupils' work. Inspectors also scrutinised 110 questionnaires from parents and carers and others from staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How successfully is the school tackling low attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1?
- Is the quality of care, guidance and support as effective as suggested by the school's self-evaluation?
- How effectively is the collaboration with St Gregory's improving the quality of leadership and management?

Information about the school

The school is of average size. Most pupils are of White British heritage but a few pupils do speak English as an additional language. The majority of these pupils are of Polish heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is twice the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than average.

In September 2010, following the retirement of the previous headteacher, the school entered into a collaboration with St Gregory's Catholic Primary School. Both schools still have their own governing body but they share an executive headteacher. Subsequently, there has been a significant change in leadership roles at St Maria Goretti, including the appointment of an assistant headteacher.

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: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Maria Goretti is a satisfactory school. The executive headteacher has quickly established an effective team of leaders and managers and together they are securing rapid improvements in pupils' achievement and attendance, and the quality of teaching. The rising rate of attendance reflects the good care, guidance and support which have significantly reduced the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school. This is just one example of the high priority the school gives to ensuring the well-being of pupils. The 'Let's Get Cooking' club successfully promotes healthy eating and the recent appointment of a full-time learning mentor contributes effectively to the pupils' good behaviour.

Teaching and learning are now satisfactory, following a period when external reviews by the local authority judged teaching to be inadequate. This is because regular lesson observations and work scrutiny enable the school's leaders to challenge inadequate provision and implement professional support. The sharing of best practice with St Gregory's has led to improvements in the teaching of English and mathematics, and the management of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The executive headteacher has also raised awareness among staff and the governing body of the progress each individual pupil should make over a school year. Every half-term, assessments in reading, writing and mathematics identify how successfully pupils are working towards their targets. School assessment data and inspection evidence confirm that attainment is now average.

Progress throughout the school is satisfactory. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, adults have caring relationships with the children and plan a good range of activities. However, the school is still establishing reliable systems to assess children's progress in this area of the school and developing the curriculum to ensure that the children have good opportunities to learn outside the classroom. Although some teaching is good, it is not yet consistently good across the school. In teaching observed in Years 1 to Year 6, weaknesses include lessons where the activities do not sufficiently challenge pupils, where there is too much teacher direction and too few opportunities for pupils to show initiative, and where adults miss opportunities to use questions to deepen pupils' understanding during lessons.

The satisfactory curriculum has significant strengths. The 'Early Birds' study support club successfully helps pupils, many of whom are at risk of underachievement, get an excellent start to the school day. It is just one example of how the school adjusts provision to meet the needs of specific groups. Measures to improve planning to ensure that learning in all subjects builds on earlier experiences are still at an early stage and their impact is variable.

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The school's own evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate and leaders and managers use the information well to address the most urgent priorities. While maintaining existing strengths, the executive headteacher and her team have led improvements in key aspects of the school's work with determination and enthusiasm. As a result, the school has good capacity to sustain and develop these improvements in the future.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To raise achievement, increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching to 70% by the end of the autumn term 2011 by:
 - - consistently using assessment information to plan lessons that ensure pupils of all abilities tackle activities that have sufficient challenge
 - - giving pupils plenty of opportunities to show initiative and work independently
 - - using questioning to help pupils deepen their understanding.
- Secure better outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - - increasing the opportunities for pupils to learn outdoors
 - - improving the outdoor learning environment and the range of resources
 - - developing reliable procedures for assessing children's learning and development.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

In all classes, pupils show positive attitudes to learning and pupils of all backgrounds and abilities get on well together. Pupils offer a polite and friendly welcome to visitors and report that they feel safe, secure and valued by the adults at the school. The school is particularly successful in supporting the personal development of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable and those with significant learning, medical and behavioural needs. Pupils have good opportunities to contribute to the life of the school. They take on a number of responsibilities such as learning partners, playground leaders, head girl and boy, and classroom monitors. These roles contribute positively to the school's friendly and purposeful atmosphere. Good opportunities for reflection on their own and others' beliefs help pupils develop a respect for one another's feelings and values. Consequently, the pupils demonstrate good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

From low starting points on entry to the Nursery, all pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, achieve satisfactorily. Attainment at the end of the Reception class and Year 2 has been low for a number of years. Changes to staffing, including the appointment of a new coordinator for the Early Years Foundation Stage, have strengthened provision and pupils in Year 2 are currently working close to the expected levels. Pupils are spending more time this year learning how sounds and letters link to form words and this is improving reading and writing skills. For example, during a lesson on letters and sounds, pupils in Year 2 made good progress because the teacher successfully encouraged active participation, checked carefully how well individuals were

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progressing and helped those who were struggling to correct misconceptions by referring to earlier learning. In 2010, attainment by the end of Year 6 improved and was close to the national average. The current Year 6 pupils are sustaining these gains because the deputy headteacher is providing effective additional support each morning. However, inconsistencies in the quality of provision in other classes mean that in some year groups a significant proportion of pupils do not have the literacy and numeracy skills expected of pupils their age. This variability in provision also limits the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Not all teachers use information about gaps in these pupils' knowledge and their individual targets to plan lessons that lead to good progress.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The best learning occurs when challenging activities capture the pupils' interest and make them keen to learn more. This was the case in a mathematics lesson where pupils were able to use the interactive whiteboard and mirrors to explore reflection and patterns. In this lesson, lively discussion and opportunities for cooperative work successfully reinforced teaching points. However, in too many lessons, there is a lack of active engagement and challenge in learning. Instead, pupils are required to sit and listen for too long and have little opportunity to contribute their own ideas or work independently because adults direct every stage of the lesson. At other times, pupils of all abilities work at the same task. For example, in a science lesson everyone worked towards the same learning objective

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because planning did not take into account their earlier experiences in the subject. The previous inspection identified the need to improve marking so that all pupils know how to improve their work. Responses to pupils' work in writing and mathematics books show good progress towards this improvement point and most pupils are clear about their learning targets.

The school rightly focuses on developing literacy and numeracy skills. However, it misses opportunities to promote these skills in other areas of the curriculum. More successful are the recent strategies to increase the range of extra-curricular activities for pupils and their families. These include additional clubs for pupils covering sports, arts and hobbies, and adult education courses including English language courses for parents who speak English as an additional language. The school monitors very closely the participation of different groups in these activities and rightly celebrates the increasing number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities who now enjoy the additional provision.

The school can point to many examples of good care and support for individuals and families. The learning mentor and family support worker form a very strong partnership and work closely with local agencies, including social services, to ensure that children receive appropriate and prompt support when necessary. These effective partnerships have led to improved attendance and behaviour and, on a number of occasions, secured the safety and well-being of children.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The strong leadership from the executive headteacher and other senior leaders has motivated the whole school community to work together to raise achievement. An accurate analysis of the school's performance has resulted in effective action to improve provision. As a result, teaching and learning are securely satisfactory and improving strongly.

The governing body fulfils its duties satisfactorily. It recognises that in the past it did not monitor closely enough the school's performance and is benefiting from recent appointments that have increased its capacity to hold leaders to account for the school's effectiveness. It supports fully the executive headteacher's drive to eradicate the school's weaknesses and the ambitious targets for the current pupils in Year 6 demonstrate its high expectations.

The partnership with St Gregory's is strengthening leadership and management at all levels. For example, the recently appointed special educational needs coordinator is

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rigorously reshaping provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities following support from an experienced colleague at the partner school.

Appropriate training ensures that staff have the skills and expertise required for keeping pupils' safe. All requirements regarding safeguarding are in place. The security of everyone on the school site has benefited from improvements made following the appointment of the executive headteacher. The school knows its pupils well, especially those most at risk; good provision involving external professionals and intervention programmes is in place.

Detailed monitoring of how well pupils do ensure that all pupils benefit equally from the provision and make satisfactory progress. The school is an inclusive community and there is no evidence of any discrimination. It works well with local partners to organise on-site training for parents and carers in areas such as parenting and basic skills. The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. The pupils have strong links with the parish and local community but are less aware of the diverse cultures in the United Kingdom and the wider world.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make satisfactory progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. They know how to take care of themselves and stay safe. Routines are well established in both classes and children follow instructions willingly. They are beginning to understand the benefits of eating healthy food. However, a majority do not reach the expected skill levels in important areas such as their literacy, numeracy and personal, social and emotional development. This reflects their lower-than-expected skill levels in these areas on entry to the Nursery and the satisfactory provision.

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Children settle quickly into school because of good induction arrangements which include home visits. They listen carefully to stories and enjoy activities when they match their interests, such as finding out what happens when they add water to breakfast cereal. However, learning slows when there is insufficient use of assessment information to plan activities to meet individual needs and interests, and when children work independently for too long without adult intervention and so lack opportunities to develop ideas and speaking skills. The indoor environment generally promotes learning well and there is an appropriate range of resources. However, resources to extend learning in all outdoor areas are less motivating and planning does not always draw upon the full potential of the playground and school grounds.

The recently appointed coordinator has an accurate view of the strengths and weakness of provision. She has been active in tackling long-standing barriers to better practice. For example, systems for checking the progress children make in Nursery and Reception have been unreliable in the past and the school recognises that this remains a priority area for improvement. She has also ensured that there is a named member of staff responsible for the well-being of each child and for building a positive relationship with that child's parents or carers.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire was larger than average. Their questionnaire responses and comments made personally to inspectors were overwhelmingly positive about the school. Parents and carers appreciate many aspects including how much their children enjoy school, how safe they are, and how well the school meets their children's particular needs. The inspection evidence generally supports the respondents' views. However, as the report explains, inspectors found the quality of teaching, the progress made by pupils and the school's overall effectiveness satisfactory. A small number of respondents wrote comments sharing their concerns about how the school managed pupils' behaviour. Inspectors found behaviour in lessons and on the playground to be good. They spoke to pupils about behaviour in the school, who commented that a few children do have difficulty behaving well but that the school deals with their problems effectively.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Maria Goretti Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 110 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 223 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	61	55	46	42	3	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	61	55	46	42	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	50	45	51	46	7	6	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	53	48	50	45	5	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	54	49	47	43	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	48	44	57	52	4	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	46	42	58	53	4	4	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	47	43	52	47	4	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	46	42	56	51	4	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	38	35	50	45	12	11	6	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	41	37	51	46	10	9	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	42	38	59	54	7	6	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	54	49	47	43	5	5	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Maria Goretti Catholic Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST2 0LY

You may remember that I recently visited your school with two other inspectors. I would like to thank all of you for making us so welcome and being so polite and helpful. We had the chance to talk with many of you and it was pleasing to hear how much you enjoy school. You like your teachers and helpers, and you always try to do your best.

Your school is satisfactory and improving all the time. These are some of our main findings.

- The standards of your work are rising and you are all now making better progress.
- You feel safe in school and have a good awareness of healthy living.
- You are very well cared for at school.
- You are attending more regularly.

In order to ensure the school continues to improve, I have asked the school's leaders and managers to do the following things.

- Increase the amount of good teaching so that you all make good progress
- Check carefully the progress children make in the Nursery and Reception classes and give them better opportunities to learn outside the classroom.

Your headteacher, the staff and the governing body want the school to continue to improve. You can help too by making sure you come to school as often as possible and by working hard all the time.

Thank you once again for being so helpful.

Yours sincerely

Anthony O'Malley

Her Majesty's Inspector

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