

St Gerard's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106941
Local authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	377497
Inspection dates	12–13 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Rosemary Eaton

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	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Des Maher
Headteacher	Patricia Lunn
Date of previous school inspection	02 July 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed five lessons each taught by a different teacher and held meetings with pupils, members of the governing body and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at displays, samples of pupils' work, assessment information, the school development plan and a range of policies. The 25 questionnaires returned by parents and carers were read and analysed as were those from pupils and staff.

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

- The extent to which pupils' progress has accelerated since the previous inspection.
- How effectively leaders have eliminated inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.
- The effectiveness with which teachers meet the needs of different groups of pupils.

Information about the school

This school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. Most pupils are White British although increasing numbers are of Black African heritage and speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. An above average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. The school holds the Activemark and Excellence in Enterprise Education awards and has 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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Gerard's is a good school because its leaders have been successful in bringing about improvements. The most significant developments have been in the quality of teaching. Because they are now taught well, pupils are making good progress and their attainment is rising, particularly in English. Leaders have an accurate view of what the school does well and where more improvement is needed. Because they have taken care to identify what pupils find particularly difficult, a more structured approach to teaching writing has been introduced. Pupils like this very much and it is improving the quality of their work. More time is needed for this new method to become embedded and have its full impact. Attainment in mathematics is rising more slowly because pupils have gaps in their learning to make up, due to previous inconsistencies in teaching. Pupils' personal development has been strengthened to such an extent that when combined with their good achievement, it results in overall outcomes that are outstanding. Within the school, there is a clear sense of purpose and shared goals that underline its good capacity to continue to move forward. It provides outstanding value for money.

A number of aspects of the school's work are outstanding. Doing all it can to care for, guide and support its pupils is at the heart of St Gerard's. As a result, pupils feel entirely safe and understand, for example, that 'rules are there to protect us'. In turn, they are highly supportive of each other and behave extremely well. They put into practice the outcomes of their exceptionally strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, such as an ability to empathise with friends who have left family members behind in another country. The list of responsibilities that pupils are willing and able to accept is very long and goes towards ensuring that they make an outstanding contribution to the school and community. Pupils remark that 'playground leaders encourage us to do sports' and the healthy tuck shop is run by Year 6 pupils. Pupils' responses to the school's considerable efforts to promote healthy lifestyles are exceptional and begin in the Early Years Foundation Stage where children organise their snack time and tuck into fruit and milk with gusto.

The school continues to provide outstandingly well for children in the Reception Year. Consequently, they make exceptional progress in developing the skills needed in Key Stage 1. The warm and welcoming learning environment exactly matches these children's needs and means that they settle in very quickly and start learning at once.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in mathematics by focusing efforts particularly on:
 - ensuring that pupils are able to interpret and tackle written problems effectively
 - improving the speed with which pupils recall number facts
 - introducing more practical and active approaches to mathematics in order to aid pupils' understanding.
- Consolidate and build on the improvements made in pupils' writing skills by applying and enhancing the school's current approaches to teaching writing.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils say that 'learning a lot' is among the things they like best about the school. Their keenness is evident in lessons, where they readily contribute ideas and answer questions. Their outstanding behaviour means that pupils listen carefully to each other and work at individual tasks without fuss. They also collaborate well, for instance, when asked to set each other mathematics problems or review another pupil's written work. Pupils enjoy a challenge and are delighted when they, or their friends, are successful. For some, weaknesses in their language skills make it difficult for them to understand and tackle written problems in mathematics.

When they enter the Reception class, children's skills are nearly always below those expected for their age, and are well below in the area of communication, language and literacy. By the end of Year 6, attainment is broadly average, although the small numbers in each year group mean that there are fluctuations from year to year owing to each pupil's starting point. Reading is the strongest element but both writing and mathematics are improving. Attainment in mathematics is suppressed by the difficulty many older pupils have in recalling number facts, such as multiplication, quickly. In the past, there have been significant variations in the progress made in different year groups and by different groups of pupils. Inspection evidence reveals that progress is now good in all cases. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those in the early stages of learning English progress well because staff understand their needs and take good care to meet them.

Pupils learn extensively about how to keep themselves safe, for example, when out and about or when using the internet. They are adamant that there is no bullying. Pupils say that when they 'get a little cross' or there are 'silly arguments', they make friends again quickly. Very maturely, they know that it is best to sort problems out at once, so that they do not waste time in lessons. Pupils from different backgrounds work and play together exceptionally harmoniously. Older pupils encourage younger ones to behave well and they set excellent examples. Year 5 pupils act as buddies to children in the Reception Year, helping to smooth their way into school routines. Pupils are active in the local community and they raise funds for people around the world. Their efforts are spurred on by their awareness of inequalities which they gain, for example, by acting out the roles of children who work in factories instead of attending school. Attendance is above average, helping to prepare pupils well for the

next stage in their education. Additionally, they apply their basic skills for a range of purposes and they learn to be enterprising. Each class is challenged annually to run a business and pupils regularly plan events such as discos, working to a budget.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is now much more consistent than previously. Teachers' enthusiasm is infectious and they quickly establish very positive working relationships with pupils, helping to maintain high standards of behaviour. Lessons are planned carefully, usually with good use made of assessment information to match work to the needs of different groups of pupils. Teachers make sure that pupils understand what they are to learn and how they can recognise success. Agreed approaches, for example, to teaching pupils how to plan their writing, are implemented uniformly. Teaching assistants are clear about their roles and make valuable contributions to lessons. Occasionally, teachers and teaching assistants do not check often enough on how well pupils are getting on when they are working independently. This means that work cannot be adjusted quickly, should individuals find it too hard or too easy.

The curriculum effectively meets the needs of different groups of pupils. For example, particular programmes are in place to support those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils' interests are taken into account when planning topics and they are consulted about what they would like to learn. For instance, during work to celebrate the centenary of the parish, 'What did cars look like?' wondered one pupil. The writing curriculum is still being embedded and enhanced and a current priority is to provide more practical and active learning opportunities to support pupils' understanding of mathematical ideas. Pupils' personal development is promoted particularly well, for example, through lessons on health education or enterprise. Visits, residentials, visitors and the popular clubs enhance learning and social education and often extend pupils' horizons.

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

Pupils and their families are known extremely well, enabling any necessary support to be targeted precisely. Staff are quick to observe signs that may indicate the need for the school to intervene. The learning mentor is often a key player in the swift responses made when pupils or families are facing difficult circumstances. Well-established links with a wide range of agencies support this work. Arrangements are made to sensitively help pupils whenever barriers to learning and development, such as problems maintaining friendships, are identified. St Gerard's exemplary work to support bereaved children has been shared with other schools. Points of transition are managed very effectively, for instance, through carefully preparing pupils for their new classes or the move to high school. Robust approaches to promoting attendance have led to improvement since the previous inspection. The impact of this outstanding aspect of provision is seen in outcomes such as pupils' behaviour and their feeling entirely safe in school, enabling them to take full advantage of lessons and other opportunities, enhancing their learning and progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's drive and determination have been key factors in the school's progress. The other senior leaders share her high expectations and effective teamwork is a strong feature of the school. All aspects of the school's work are monitored carefully and information, for example, about the quality of teaching, is collated and used when organising training and setting targets for the whole staff or individuals. In this way, planning for developments is successful and has led to improvements in both provision and outcomes. Monitoring activities are increasingly being shared by all leaders. Members of the governing body are also involved in finding out about the school at first-hand. They are well-informed, committed and enthusiastic, and are prepared to challenge the school to improve further. Equality of opportunity is promoted well. Great efforts are made to ensure that individual pupils are not disadvantaged. The school promotes community cohesion successfully and is itself both closely-knit and very welcoming. Links with other communities are growing all the time, for example, through current work to involve parishioners and local families in researching the area's history. Safeguarding arrangements reflect good practice in every way. Formal training for staff is of high quality and records are maintained carefully. The caring and trusting ethos means that pupils and staff are confident to share any concerns.

These are the grades for the 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	2
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

From below average starting points, children make significant gains in their learning during the Reception Year. However, they do not all reach age-related expectations in the area of communication, language and literacy, because their skills are often so weak initially. Children become very confident learners, independent and curious about the world around them. Relationships with adults and each other are excellent, as is behaviour. Children benefit from the examples set by Year 1 pupils, who help them to learn about routines and show them how to investigate and use resources. They take part in a wide range of carefully planned activities, balanced expertly between time given for children to explore and follow their inclinations, and activities led by adults, including the highly skilled and innovative teaching of reading and writing. For example, 'Jedi writing', using light sabres, which was both exciting and effective. Adults pick up at once on children's interests and devise activities to capitalise on these. For example, noticing some boys' fascination with insects, staff provided additional resources and opportunities, which engrossed children and led to some very purposeful writing. Questioning is a particular strength of teaching. Staff extend children's thinking as far as it can go and seize every opportunity to promote learning. Rigorous assessments of learning are used extensively to inform planning for individual children. The outdoor environment reflects the indoors, with well-organised and easily accessed resources. Leadership promotes staff teamwork exceptionally well and successfully encourages parents and carers to get involved with their children's learning. Children's safety and well-being is given the highest priority.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The parents and carers returning the questionnaires were almost all very positive about the school, reflecting the inspection findings. A number wrote to say how welcoming they find the school and praised its 'family' atmosphere. The very few

negative comments were either beyond the scope of the inspection or could not be endorsed by the evidence obtained.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Gerard's 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 inspector received 25 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 105 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	76	6	24	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	21	84	3	12	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	17	68	7	28	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	60	9	36	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	18	72	6	24	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	60	9	36	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	68	7	28	0	0	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)	17	68	7	28	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	68	8	32	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	64	7	28	1	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	64	5	20	2	8	1	4
The school is led and managed effectively	17	68	7	28	1	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	18	72	7	28	0	0	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 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 2010/11 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.



14 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Gerard's Catholic Primary School, Rotherham, S65 4AE

Thank you for being so friendly and polite when we inspected your school. We would especially like to thank the pupils who talked to us about St Gerard's. You were excellent ambassadors for the school. We have judged that yours is a good school.

These are some of the things that helped us to make our decision:

- you make good progress, because the quality of teaching is good
- your behaviour is outstanding and means that everyone can enjoy their time at school
- the school takes extremely good care of you, so you always feel safe
- you learn a great deal about how to be healthy
- you take on many jobs and responsibilities, so you make an excellent contribution to the school and community
- your school leaders do a good job and that is why the school has improved so much since it was last inspected.

Your reading, writing and mathematics are all improving, but the school wants you to do better still. To help, we have asked the school to do the following:

- make sure you understand how to solve problems in mathematics and can quickly remember information such as your times tables
- keep using the new method of helping you to plan your writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Rosemary Eaton
Lead inspector

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