

St George's Catholic School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123851
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	380749
Inspection dates	14–15 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Ian Hancock 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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen MacConnell
Headteacher	Peter Hanratty
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2009
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed eight teachers and visited 14 lessons. They also visited the school's breakfast club and after-school club. The inspectors held discussions with groups of pupils, staff, governors, and a representative of the local authority. They also looked at a range of documentation, including the school's analysis of pupils' attainment and the progress they make, plans for improvement and policies such as the one on safeguarding. The inspectors analysed 83 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, as well as 95 questionnaires from pupils and 26 from staff.

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

- The effectiveness of the school's actions to raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics.
- Whether teaching secures good learning for all pupils, particularly those who are more able and those from minority ethnic groups.
- How well assessment information is used in lessons to support learning, challenge pupils and develop their independence.
- The extent to which leaders and managers monitor the school's work and use the information to secure improvement.

Information about the school

St George's Catholic School is smaller than the average-sized primary school. A large majority of pupils are of White British heritage, but around a third of pupils come from minority ethnic groups. This proportion has risen since the previous inspection, and the proportion of pupils whose first language is other than English is well above the average. Many of these pupils are at the early stages of speaking English when they join the school. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average and no pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The school runs a breakfast club and after-school club that are managed by the governing body. These were visited during the 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

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. The school has a number of good and outstanding features that reflect the high value it places on pupils' welfare and personal development. The school's inclusive ethos ensures that all pupils, particularly the increasing proportions that come from minority ethnic groups, are welcomed and fully integrated into the life of the school. The school has experienced a period of considerable change since the last inspection. Many teachers are new to the school or have recently taken on leadership roles. Consequently, actions taken to improve pupils' achievement are not sufficiently established to secure consistently good progress throughout the school.

When children join the school, their levels of development fluctuate, but are broadly similar to those found in other schools. However, an increasing proportion have lower than average skills in communication, language and literacy, including some who are at the early stages of speaking English. The youngest children make good progress in their reading and personal development, and satisfactory progress in the other areas of learning. Older pupils make the progress expected so that when they leave school, at the end of Year 6, their attainment is not significantly different from the average. The proportions of pupils who attain the expected and higher levels are rising in some year groups as a result of good teaching. However, the quality of teaching is not consistently good throughout the school.

Teaching at the school has a number of strengths, for example teachers' confident knowledge of subjects and the effective use of new technologies to demonstrate important ideas. The specialist teaching of mathematics to targeted individuals has led to good and at times exceptional progress. However, some aspects of teaching slow the progress pupils make in lessons. Teachers do not always make best use of assessment information to focus their teaching and carefully match tasks to pupils' needs. In a few lessons, teachers talk for too long and do not question individuals incisively about their learning. Despite good levels of independence, pupils are not given enough opportunities to evaluate their work and teachers' comments in books do not always help them to improve.

The recently established leadership team are highly committed to the school and have a clear view about what needs to be done to make things better. Monitoring is becoming more rigorous, but occasionally the school's view of itself is overgenerous. This is because information gathered through monitoring is not concisely summarised and leaders do not have easy access to key information on the progress that

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different groups of pupils are making. The improving rates of progress in a number of year groups are evidence of satisfactory capacity to improve.

Pupils feel exceptionally safe and have an outstanding knowledge of a range of health issues. Parents and carers value the quality of care and support provided, particularly to pupils with medical needs. One questionnaire response praised the 'outstanding' attention paid to their child's needs, while another noted their children '... felt safe and secure at all times and incredibly well cared for'. These views are representative of many responses and are similar to those of the inspection team.

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?

- By July 2012, build on the strengths in teaching and reduce the remaining variability so that pupils make consistently good progress in all lessons by:
 - ensuring a balance of teacher instruction and active pupil learning
 - improving teachers' use of questions to check pupils' understanding and challenge their thinking
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own learning
 - ensuring that teachers' comments in books guide pupils on how to improve their work.
- Improve the accuracy and use of assessment information to target learning more precisely in lessons and ensure that tasks are carefully matched to pupils' needs and abilities.
- By January 2012, establish more rigorous systems to support leaders and managers in driving improvement by:
 - ensuring easy access to key information on the progress of different groups of pupils
 - collating information gathered through monitoring into succinct summaries
 - breaking down end-of-year objectives in plans for improvement into smaller steps so that progress towards the intended outcomes can be evaluated more easily.

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

In lessons, high quality relationships mean pupils enjoy their learning and discuss ideas enthusiastically with others. In many lessons, higher attaining pupils are given the chance to undertake more demanding work. A notable example was seen in a Year 5 mathematics lesson on division. In this lesson, the teacher skilfully guided the more able pupils so they avoided listening to unnecessary explanations and proceeded directly to harder work. Consequently all pupils made good progress because they were effectively challenged. However, in some lessons tasks are not so well matched to pupils' needs and abilities. This is because lesson plans do not

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take sufficient account of pupils’ previous learning. While some groups of pupils, such as those from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve well, the achievement of most pupils is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities often make good progress in lessons because of the capable and responsive support they receive from adults. Nevertheless, the school’s internal records show that their progress over time is satisfactory rather than good.

Throughout the school, pupils are polite, respectful and demonstrate a caring attitude towards each other. They behave well in lessons and during less structured activities such as playtimes. Pupils’ reflective attitudes are informed by a strong awareness of other cultures. They take great pride in their school and talk enthusiastically of the good contribution they make by taking on responsible roles. For example, members of the ‘Lunch Bunch’ regularly canvass pupils’ opinions and meet with the headteacher to discuss their findings. These attributes, coupled with pupils’ satisfactory achievement and their average attendance, mean they are adequately prepared for the future.

The school’s excellent facilities, such as the modern sports hall and indoor heated swimming pool, are used well to promote healthy lifestyles. Each day begins with a brisk, active routine and ends with opportunities to attend a range of popular after-school clubs. Pupils participate enthusiastically in initiatives to improve their health. For example, those attending the gardening club are able to eat the produce they grow in ‘veg beds’. Most pupils demonstrate an exceptional understanding of how to keep themselves safe and are confident in raising concerns with adults.

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	1
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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

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How effective is the provision?

Teachers' confident use of new technology and the skilled support of other adults are strong features of many lessons. Nevertheless, the quality of teaching is not consistent enough to ensure good progress for the majority of pupils. There are several reasons for this. Insufficient use is made of assessment information to focus teaching sharply on those in danger of falling behind. On occasions, teachers' explanations are overlong or unnecessary and pupils have limited opportunities to evaluate their work to gain a better understanding of what is required. When assessment is used well, teachers effectively question pupils and their comments in books provide clear guidance on how pupils can improve their work. A notable example was seen in a Year 6 lesson on recognising the factors of prime numbers. In this lesson, the teacher skilfully questioned individuals to check their understanding and challenge their thinking. Her 'top tips' comments in books provided detailed feedback on the next steps in their learning. Pupils in this lesson made good progress because the work stretched their thinking and they had a clear idea of how to improve.

Partnership links, such as those with a local secondary school, are strong and make a significant contribution to curriculum provision. There is a particularly high take-up of music and sporting activities. Pupils' learning is enriched further by residential visits, theme days and community events such as participation in the Taunton in Bloom festival. Pupils have regular opportunities to apply English and mathematics skills in other subjects, such as writing performance poetry on a residential visit. Nevertheless, the pupils' skills in some subjects are not systematically developed.

The school makes good provision for pupils' care, guidance and support. Skilled and committed adults effectively support pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. For example, those joining the school at the early stages of speaking English settle quickly and make good progress. This is because of the effective systems in place to promptly assess their needs and target additional support. Transitions for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are managed particularly well when joining and leaving the school.

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

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How effective are leadership and management?

Following a period of turbulence in staffing, the recently established leadership team has set about tasks vigorously. Ambition is high and leaders demonstrate a strong determination to raise standards. The headteacher, ably assisted by the deputy headteacher and other leaders, has implemented new ways of working. Actions taken to improve achievement in mathematics are beginning to bear fruit. For example, curriculum targets are in place and there is a strong focus on developing mental arithmetic skills in every lesson. Regular meetings are held with teachers to review the progress pupils' have made. However, the school recognises that current systems do not provide leaders with easy access to key information on how well groups of pupils are doing. Similarly, information gathered through monitoring activities is not summarised to provide a succinct overview so leaders are hindered in taking prompt action to address emerging underachievement. Well-thought-out plans for improvement are in place, but the absence of regular 'milestones' makes it difficult to evaluate progress towards the intended outcomes.

The governing body is highly committed to the school and makes considerable efforts to seek the views of parents and carers through regular questionnaires. Members of the governing body are actively involved in evaluating the school through observation of pupils' learning and discussions with staff. The governing body is developing an increasingly accurate view of the school and ensures that its statutory responsibilities are met.

Equality of opportunity is promoted adequately. This is evident in the similar outcomes for different groups of pupils and the increasing proportions that make good progress. The school has robust arrangements for keeping children safe. Procedures meet current requirements and are supported well by regular training. At times, leaders are over-reliant on individuals for some aspects of health and safety, such as the completion of risk assessments. The school knows its community well and effectively promotes a better understanding of others. This is evident in the harmonious relationships which are a strong feature of the school and in pupils' knowledgeable views of communities different from their own.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3

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tackles discrimination	
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle quickly due to the well-established routines and high-quality care they receive. The well-equipped and welcoming environment provides plenty of opportunities for children to make choices and to learn through play. While children start with skills broadly expected for their age, this fluctuates, reflecting the increasing proportions of children whose first language is other than English. These children are supported well by adults, including some who speak one of the additional languages. The strong focus on developing communication and literacy skills means children make good progress in their reading and in their personal, social and emotional development. Actions taken to improve children’s early writing skills have also resulted in good progress. However, improvements have not been in place long enough to achieve sustained good progress across all areas of learning.

Leadership is good. The newly appointed leaders have a good knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and share a common sense of purpose. Aspirations are high and clear plans for further improvement are in place. Children’s above-average personal development and their good progress in reading and early writing skills demonstrate the effectiveness of actions taken to raise children’s achievement. The timely interactions and observations of adults are used well to inform subsequent learning. Children’s welfare is given a high priority and staff work hard to involve parents and carers fully in their child’s learning.

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	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of questionnaire responses from parents and carers were overwhelmingly positive about the school. The levels of agreement with each statement were higher than the average. A number of responses commended the commitment of the staff and the quality of care their child had received. Responses

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were unanimous in their praise for the school's work in keeping their child safe and helping them to adopt a healthy lifestyle. These views are similar to those of the inspectors. Parents and carers responses were equally positive about the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make. Whilst there are strengths in the quality of teaching, the recent changes are not sufficiently established to secure consistently good progress.

A few negative comments were received. These were brought to the school's attention and, where appropriate, are reflected in the report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St George’s Catholic 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 82 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 204 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	74	90	9	11	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	64	78	19	23	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	42	51	35	43	4	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	45	55	33	40	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	60	73	18	22	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	49	60	30	37	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	55	67	25	30	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)	46	56	27	33	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	48	59	32	39	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	39	48	36	44	3	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	41	50	32	39	2	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	50	61	32	39	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	67	82	12	15	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 are 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.



16 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St George's Catholic School, Taunton TA1 3NR

Thank you for sparing the time to talk to us when we inspected your school recently. We learnt a lot from talking with you and from watching you learn in lessons. We were made to feel very welcome and know that you are proud of your school.

St George's Catholic School is a satisfactory school. This means that some things are going well, but there are things that could be better. There are a number of good features about the school. You have an excellent understanding of how to keep yourselves safe and make healthy choices. In the best lessons, you make good progress because you learn by doing and the work makes you think carefully. The school takes good care of you and everybody is made to feel welcome and a part of the school.

We have asked your headteacher, staff and members of the governing body to do three things to make the school even better. They will help more of you to make good progress by making all your lessons as good as the best ones. Your teachers will use the information they collect on your progress to ensure that the work you do will stretch you without being too difficult. Those who lead the school will make greater use of the information they gather on how well you learn so that they can improve things if you are not doing as well as expected.

You can help by working hard and encouraging everybody to do their best each day. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector

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