

St Maria Goretti Catholic Primary School

Aylesbury Road, Bucknall, Stoke, ST2 0LY

Inspection dates 18 – 19 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school because;

- The majority of pupils make good progress and learn well in many subjects.
- Since the previous inspection attainment in English and mathematics has risen considerably. It now broadly matches national averages.
- Pupils' progress in reading is especially strong so that, from low starting points on entry to the school, most pupils leave in Year 6 with attainment above national averages.
- Teaching and learning are good across the school and some teaching is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and ensure that their lessons are interesting and help pupils to learn effectively.
- Pupils enjoy being in school and behaviour is good. Pupils say they feel safe and highly valued because of the high levels of care and support they receive.
- The executive headteacher, ably supported by the governing body, has driven improvement forward over the last two years with energy and skill. Weaker teaching has been robustly challenged, expectations considerably raised and staffing almost completely restructured. Given these changes, the ability of the school to bring about sustained improvement is good.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Too few pupils gain higher grades in mathematics and weaknesses remain in standards of writing in Year 4.
- Some pupils do not yet work effectively in an independent manner, especially those who are more-able.
- Attendance at school remains below average, which impacts upon the continuity of some pupils' learning experiences and limits their progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons, of which two were joint observations with the executive headteacher. In addition, the inspection team made a number of other short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, parents, representatives of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, and the school’s senior and middle managers and teachers.
- Inspectors took account of 11 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) as well as the school’s own surveys of pupils’ and parents’ views of the school in planning the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work, and looked at a range of documents, including pupil performance data, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance and safeguarding arrangements.

Inspection team

Nigel Cromey-Hawke, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Maureen Coleman	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized school,.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is well above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational need is average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is well above average.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage, but the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language has risen to above average this year through the changing intake of the school.
- In September 2010, the school entered into a collaboration with St Gregory's Catholic Primary School. Both schools retain their own governing body but share a strategic governor steering group and an executive headteacher.
- The school operates its own before-school and breakfast club.
- The school has many awards, including Healthy Schools' status, the Activemark, Eco-Schools award and Extended School and Quality in Study Support awards.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise achievement by:
 - focusing support for the more-able pupils within mathematics and ensuring that they are challenged
 - ensuring that all teachers and teaching assistants create and appropriately support pupils to work independently, especially the more-able.
- Improve pupils' attendance at school, especially those who are persistently absent and those pupils taking holidays during school time.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with basic skills that are low in relation to those expected for their age. Children settle quickly into the warm and safe environment of the nursery and their needs are well identified and met, for instance in language development for the recently arrived group of Polish children. Most children make good progress across all areas of learning within the Nursery and Foundation classes because of the good and sometimes outstanding teaching they receive.
- Over the last three years pupils' attainment in English and mathematics on leaving the school in Year 6 has risen from low to broadly average. This is because of a concerted drive led by the executive headteacher to improve the quality of pupils' learning experiences through better quality teaching and more closely monitored support.
- As a result of the raised expectations and new ways of working, the vast majority of pupils acquire knowledge and develop their understanding quickly and securely across a wide range of subjects. They develop a wide range of skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics that ensures they are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Pupils' reading skills, in particular, have benefited from a considerable focus from the moment they enter the school. Attainment in reading matches national expectations now in Year 2 and exceeds it by the time pupils reach Year 6.
- Past weaknesses in mathematics have also been largely overcome by a major revision of the way it is taught. Lower-ability pupils, in particular, are now making at least good progress in this area. However, the proportion of higher levels being gained in national testing in Year 6 remains below average.
- Differences between the performance of girls and boys were identified two years ago and, through closely focused support and adjustments to the curriculum, this gap has been virtually closed over the last year.
- The vast majority of pupils are making at least expected levels of progress throughout the school from their starting points and the proportions exceeding this compare favourably with national figures. Many pupils who are eligible for free school meals, those who are disabled or have special educational needs, those who speak English as an additional language and those in local authority care are now making accelerated progress. Given pupils' starting points, this represents good achievement.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching over time is good. During the inspection all lessons observed were at least good with some outstanding. As a result, most pupils and groups of pupils currently on roll in the school make good progress and achieve well.
- Teachers have high expectations, informed by clear direction from senior leaders and managers. Rigorous assessment of pupils' attainment is carried out half-termly and feeds into tracking systems and pupil progress meetings that inform staff of each pupil's progress. This information is then used successfully to plan lessons that meet the majority of pupils' needs well.
- In almost all lessons the interactive whiteboard is used effectively to engage pupils and extend their understanding. Teachers are skilled at consolidating pupils' new learning through the use of well-chosen activities, and skilful questioning often engages pupils' interests and extends their knowledge quickly.
- The teaching of reading skills is good, with well-structured lessons on letters and sounds and guided reading sessions that give pupils the tools to move their learning forward swiftly. The school recognises that some pupils' writing skills in Year 4 are below average, as a result of past weaker teaching, which limits these pupils' ability to communicate their learning effectively but this gap is being rapidly closed through targeted support from the

current teacher

- Teaching rightly focuses upon developing pupils' abilities to explain their own learning and value the contributions of others in lessons. Such teaching supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. For example, in a Year 5 lesson through mature and confident discussion, pupils made outstanding progress in developing their qualities of personal honesty.
- Teachers usually monitor pupils' progress in lessons well and have begun to develop strategies to help pupils to learn independent of adult support. Detailed individual learning targets are in place and already well known by pupils and are helping them to have control over their own learning. Not all teachers and their assistants are skilled at creating and appropriately supporting independent learning activities within lessons, however, especially for the more-able pupils.
- Pupils are highly appreciative of the quality of teaching within the school and of improvements that have been made over the last two years.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The warm atmosphere within the school, where all pupils are made to feel valued and welcome is a major strength and contributes to pupils' positive attitudes to learning. Pupils from different backgrounds get on well together and behaviour over time is good.
- Behaviour in the best lessons and around school is often exemplary although there is evidence of minor low-level disruption in some lessons when the pace of learning slows. This is managed well, however, as is the behaviour of a very few pupils with individual behaviour plans.
- Within the small number of parents who used Parent View, a small minority expressed concerns over poor behaviour. Pupil surveys carried out by the school, as well as discussions with current pupils, show that the vast majority of them feel safe in school, well looked after and that behaviour is good. This is confirmed by a scrutiny of behavioural records and the extremely low level of exclusions.
- Inspection evidence and school records, as well as discussion with pupils, show that bullying is also very low level. When it is encountered it is dealt with well, often by pupils who have been trained as peer mentors to help each other out.
- Pupils are encouraged to take on many other responsibilities within the school and act with great maturity as members of the active school council, playground leaders and monitors of various kinds. Pupils are polite, well-mannered and punctual to school and lessons.
- Many pupils take advantage of the before-school and breakfast club to get a healthy start to their day in school, reflecting the school's awards in this area.
- Attendance is improving as a result of concerted work by the parent support coordinator and learning mentor and clear expectations being conveyed by senior staff. Over time attendance is below average, however, being held back by a small core of persistent absentees and the impact of pupils' absence from school due to holidays being taken during term time.

The leadership and management are good

The executive headteacher has driven improvement within the school over the last two years with relentless energy and skill. She has used performance management structures very robustly to reshape staffing, raise expectations and significantly improve both the quality of teaching and learning outcomes. Staff morale is high and they are wholly committed to the improvement programme.

- The governance of the school is good as:
 - the governing body has been very largely restructured over the last two years and demonstrates a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school
 - governors provide robust challenge of the school's work and now link with the partner collaboration school to share expertise, resourcing and professional development
 - the joint governor steering group formed from both collaborated schools synchronise the professional development of the executive headteacher to very good effect, ensuring that all parties' needs are met and improvement is vigorously pursued.
 - Upon taking up post, the executive headteacher immediately introduced new assessment, tracking and monitoring of pupil progress systems. These have significantly improved the school's understanding of pupils' needs.
 - A comprehensive cycle of self-evaluation and lesson monitoring, followed up by closely targeted professional development, has moved the quality of teaching from satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection to now good. This has resulted in accelerated learning for many pupils and demonstrates the school's proven ability to bring about sustained improvement. Consequently, local authority support has been light touch.
 - The role of the subject leader has been considerably enhanced over the last two years and is now highly effective.
 - The curriculum has been extensively revised and provides a rich and varied range of learning experiences for pupils, often including the extensive use of technologies. There are many opportunities for extra-curricular activities, often promoting pupils' health, fitness and personal development, again reflecting the school's awards in these areas.
 - The school provides an extensive programme of family learning that helps parents understand the work of the school and support their children's learning. Parents interviewed during the inspection were full of praise for this support and the overall quality of provision and care provided by the school.
 - Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and often benefit from joint working between the two collaborated schools.
-

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	124325
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	406233

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ray Chadwick
Executive Headteacher	Margaret Yates
Date of previous school inspection	9 February 2011
Telephone number	01782 234737
Fax number	01782 234737
Email address	stmariag@sgfl.org.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012

