

St Gregory's Catholic Primary School

Grange Road, Northampton, NN3 2AX

Inspection dates

21–22 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- The achievement of pupils in Years 1 to 6 is inadequate. This is because of weak teaching and a lack of help for groups of pupils who need support.
- Teaching does not cater well enough for pupils' differing needs. Work is often too easy or too difficult. Adults do not expect enough of the more able pupils.
- Learning is sometimes interrupted by disruptive behaviour from a few pupils.
- The governing body has not ensured that all government funding is spent appropriately.
- Leaders, managers and governors cannot show that they have brought about lasting improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement. The school has declined since it was last inspected.
- Not all staff responsible for subjects or groups of pupils have the knowledge and skills that they need.
- Teachers have not been held properly to account for how well the children in their care are doing.
- There is no system for setting targets for non-teaching staff, rewarding those who do their jobs well or identifying their individual training needs.

The school has the following strengths

- Children in the Reception class make good progress and achieve well.
- Working relationships between the staff and pupils are positive and encouraging.
- Attendance is above average and improving.
- The new headteacher has accurately diagnosed where the school's key weaknesses lie and has taken suitable steps to start the process of improvement.
- Staff and governors strongly support the changes introduced by the headteacher.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors spent a total of nine hours observing parts of 18 lessons. Of these, eight were joint observations carried out with the headteacher. All of the school's teachers who were present during the inspection were observed.
- Inspectors had informal conversations with pupils during lessons. They listened to pupils from Years 1 and 2 reading, spoke to them about reading and met with two groups of pupils they selected from class registers.
- To gather further evidence of aspects of teaching, inspectors looked closely at pupils' work in English, mathematics, science, religious education, history and geography.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, Chair of the Governing Body, staff responsible for subjects or groups of pupils, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke informally to parents and took account of the 22 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), as well as 33 questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors observed assembly and playtime. They looked at a range of documents including records of incidents and checks carried out on staff, policies, reports from the local authority and an auditor, the raising attainment plan and the school's summary evaluation.

Inspection team

Susan Aldridge, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Edgar Hastings

Additional Inspector

Helen Owen

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- St Gregory's Catholic Primary School is larger than average.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average, but has risen steadily over the last three years. The school receives additional government funding for these pupils, called the Pupil Premium.
- Although the largest group of pupils is of White British heritage, the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average. Few of these pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English, but the highest proportion is in the Reception class.
- The proportion of pupils who need extra help to learn (those supported at school action, school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs) is below average.
- The school meets the current government floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The nursery at the school is registered childcare provision and is inspected and reported on separately.
- Following the retirement of the previous headteacher, the current headteacher took up post in April 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress and raise attainment, particularly in mathematics, improve the quality of teaching and ensure that:
 - staff have high expectations of pupils, particularly the most able
 - teachers use accurate information about pupils' learning to plan precisely for all groups of pupils, so that work is demanding and well matched to pupils' ages and abilities
 - all adults are well briefed and deployed during lessons in order to maximise pupils' learning
 - lessons proceed at a brisk pace so that all pupils are kept engaged throughout
 - teachers monitor and assess pupils' progress carefully throughout lessons, to check that they are able to get on with the work set and to clear up any misunderstandings
 - marking of pupils' work consistently shows pupils clearly what they need to do to improve it
 - pupils have good opportunities to develop their skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) across all subjects
 - staff are all skilled in teaching letters and sounds (phonics), in managing pupils' behaviour and using ICT to enable pupils to learn more effectively.
- Develop the capacity for staff with leadership responsibilities to contribute to school improvement by:
 - carrying out a review of their roles and responsibilities

- providing training to enable them to monitor and evaluate teaching, use information about pupils' learning to evaluate their achievement, contribute to school improvement planning and holding staff to account for their success in promoting pupils' achievement.
- Increase the effectiveness of governance by ensuring that:
 - the governing body has a full complement of well trained governors, who are skilled in using information about how well pupils learn to hold the school to account
 - governors fulfil all of their duties, particularly in relation to the use of the Pupil Premium funding and the approval of pay increases, based on how well staff meet the targets set for them.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Following a good start in Reception, pupils join Year 1 with the knowledge and skills expected for their age. However, in the last three years, there has been a decline in the attainment of pupils by the end of Year 2, and this was low in 2012 and 2010. The decline is particularly noticeable in mathematics.
- Pupils' reading skills by Year 2 are weak. This is because there has not been a common approach to the teaching of the sounds that letters make (phonics). Not all staff have been trained in teaching this vital skill. As a result, pupils find it difficult to read words that are not familiar to them, or use their knowledge of letter sounds to help them spell. This was confirmed in June 2012, when a much smaller percentage of pupils than the national average showed competence in using phonics to read words during the standard check.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 do not make sufficient progress because of some weak teaching. The school has taken steps to improve this, but has not eradicated all the inadequate teaching.
- Attainment by Year 6 is broadly average. Girls' attainment in mathematics was low in 2012, but this reflected their lower starting points.
- In 2011 and 2012, Year 6 results showed that several groups of pupils had made inadequate progress, including groups from minority ethnic heritages. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs made inadequate progress and underachieved in both of these years.
- In Year 6, the difference in attainment in mathematics in the 2012 tests widened between pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are more advantaged. It narrowed slightly in English, but remained wider than the gap seen nationally.
- Pupils who need additional help, because they find learning difficult, do not make enough progress because teachers do not tailor tasks in lessons precisely enough to their ability levels. The system for tracking pupils' progress is still at an early stage of development, even though this was identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection. Until recently, there were no additional arrangements to support pupils who were not making sufficient progress.
- The school's current measures of pupils' learning show that progress is patchy. It is not able to show that the recent changes have had any significant impact on the progress of all groups of pupils.
- Children in Reception make good progress and achieve well to reach average standards from starting points below age-related expectations. Here, the teaching is good so children learn well through play and during adult-led sessions. Those who are learning to speak English as an additional language are well supported by the use of symbols, pictures, gestures and, for some, adults who speak the child's home language.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching does not ensure that all groups of pupils make the progress they should. The quality of teaching varies too much across the school.
- Planning is inadequate. Recent work has helped staff to have a more accurate picture of how well pupils are doing, but this information is not used well enough to plan different work for pupils of different abilities. As a result, work is too easy for some and too difficult for others. This was particularly evident in pupils' workbooks, where the more able pupils were repeatedly given work that was too easy, reflecting low expectations on the part of teachers.
- Too much responsibility for supporting pupils in lessons is placed on non-teaching staff, because lesson plans are not detailed enough. For instance, plans identify which pupils require extra help, but are not clear about how to provide this. As a result, a few pupils rely on adult support to help them learn, when the right tasks and additional resources would enable them to be more

independent.

- Additional adults in classes are not always used well enough. For example, in a mathematics lesson for older pupils, the teacher led the whole class most of the time, despite having several other adults in the room. This resulted in a very slow pace as the teacher dealt with individual pupils' answers to questions. Pupils, who had been enthusiastic at the start, became bored and listless, because they did not have enough to do and they made inadequate progress.
- Ongoing checks on pupils' progress are weak. For instance, teachers do not always use pupils' answers in lessons, such as those written on mini-whiteboards, to diagnose misunderstandings and correct them. Similarly, not all teachers check that all groups are able to get on with their work.
- The quality of marking is variable. Too often praise is given for written work that is not neat or contains inaccurate grammar, punctuation and spelling. Marking does not always show pupils how they can improve their work.
- Inspectors observed little use of ICT by teachers or pupils, apart from in the Reception class. Pupils' work confirmed that ICT is used too little to encourage learning. Similarly, teachers miss opportunities to use and further develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Staff are not all equally skilled in managing behaviour. Although they apply the school's policy consistently, weaknesses occasionally result in disrupted learning or a slowing of the pace of lessons, such as when the movement from group work to a whole class activity takes too long.
- Staff establish warm working relationships with pupils that foster self-esteem and confidence. They successfully encourage personal development in lessons when they get pupils to work in pairs and small groups, as well as on their own, to review and reflect on their work, and they recognise and reward effort, genuine progress and success.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils report that silly behaviour occasionally disrupts their learning. Inspectors observed an instance of this. However, in most lessons behaviour was good, and some outstanding behaviour was noted in an assembly.
- The school's records show that poor behaviour is an occasional rather than a regular occurrence. There have been two fixed-term exclusions in the last year. For a small number of pupils who find it difficult to behave well all the time, the school has recently arranged a short course of support at a local special school.
- Pupils are polite and respectful to adults, and they welcome visitors. They are open and honest. They enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in above average attendance.
- Pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe is adequate. They learn about road safety in Reception, and about how to recognise and deal with bullying. However, their knowledge of different types of bullying is not good; most just associate this with violence or physical harm, rather than name-calling and prejudice.
- There is a high degree of racial harmony in the school. Pupils from many different backgrounds get along well together and racist incidents are rare. Staff successfully promote an understanding and tolerance of differences, whether they are religious or cultural.
- All of the parents who submitted their views on Parent View agreed that their children are safe in school. However, a small number did not agree that the school deals effectively with bullying. Most pupils said that they feel safe in school and that when bullying is reported it is dealt with well.

The leadership and management

are inadequate

- The lack of sustained improvement in recent years is the result of inadequacies in leadership and management. Subject leaders and those who are responsible for groups of pupils have not been

adequately trained. Not all staff with responsibilities are best suited to their roles. They do not all have the necessary skills to check first-hand on the quality of teaching or use data to find out how well pupils are progressing. As a result, they have not been able to find out precisely where weaknesses lie or take suitable steps to tackle them.

- The school prides itself on its inclusive approach to children and families of different religions and ethnic groups. However, it is not successful in ensuring that all children have the same opportunities to succeed.
- The Pupil Premium funding went into the general budget for teaching staff in the past. This has now been rectified, so that it is being used to provide additional support for particular pupils. There are a few examples of individual pupils who have made rapid progress as a result, in their writing skills for instance.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are working together to drive improvement forward. The deputy headteacher has been released from his teaching commitment so that he can work alongside teachers to help them improve. This is having some beneficial effect as the deputy headteacher is a good role model of skilled and effective teaching.
- There is not enough capacity among other school leaders to secure the considerable improvement that the school needs. For example, the task of setting and reviewing targets for all teaching staff has fallen to the headteacher and deputy headteacher, because other staff with responsibilities have not been trained to do this.
- Staff are positive about working at the school. They welcome the direction provided by the new headteacher and the opportunities they are given to improve their teaching. A small number feel that there should be more opportunities for them to develop their skills and gain further qualifications.
- Most parents would recommend the school to others. A small proportion are not satisfied with the progress made by their children, the information they receive about children's progress and the school's response to concerns that they raise.
- In a recent visit made at the request of the headteacher, the local authority agreed that the school gives cause for concern. At the request of the mathematics subject leader, the local authority has given some support to extend teachers' skills in teaching mathematics in Years 1 and 2. It is too soon to see the impact of this.
- Leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Self-evaluation is accurate and used effectively to identify aspects that need to be strengthened, such as opportunities for children to develop writing skills. There are strong and beneficial links with parents and the nursery on the school site. Staff have responded well to recent opportunities to visit other schools and look at good practice elsewhere, subsequently making positive changes.
- Several of the areas for improvement identified at this inspection are the same as at the last inspection. Because many of the changes are recent and improvements not sustained over a period of time, the school is not currently demonstrating the capacity to make lasting improvement on its own.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body does not have a full complement of governors. Not all governors have had basic training in the roles and responsibilities associated with governance. Following the appointment of the headteacher, governors recognised that they were not holding the school to account or fulfilling all of their duties. Despite some governors recognising a mismatch between data showing pupils' progress and the school's evaluation of teaching in the past, they did not have the confidence to seek an explanation. The governing body has had training in how to use information about pupils' progress to check on the school's effectiveness, and further training is planned. Governors have arranged to work with a consultant to set targets for the headteacher, and have developed a policy showing how staff performance and pay will be linked in the future. They have initiated a consultation process to include non-teaching staff in this. The governing body is now checking on how the Pupil Premium funds are being used. The governing body meets its statutory duties for safeguarding pupils. Governors have decided to consult on the possibility of federating with other Catholic schools in the area to share resources and expertise.

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	122038
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	406074

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	416
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Behrens
Headteacher	Pauline Turner
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2011
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