

# St Gregory's Catholic Primary School

Grange Road, Northampton, NN3 2AX

**Inspection dates** 7–8 July 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Too much of the teaching requires improvement. Teachers are not good enough at using their knowledge of the pupils to prepare work that is at the right level for all ability groups. This is particularly the case for the most-able pupils.
- Achievement requires improvement because the rate of progress made by pupils in reading, writing and mathematics varies too much across the school. Where the teaching requires improvement, progress is not fast enough.
- In mathematics, teachers do not give pupils enough open-ended problem-solving activities to develop their reasoning skills.
- There is insufficient attention paid to ensuring that pupils of different ages and abilities develop subject-specific skills at the right level in subjects such as science, geography and history.
- The writing of some older pupils is impeded because weak teaching in the past has resulted in them forming letters incorrectly and has meant that they do not spell accurately.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, supported by the governors and other leaders, has driven improvements to teaching and learning with great determination, and with notable success.
- In Year 6, good teaching has resulted in pupils making good progress.
- Behaviour and safety are good. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. This is exemplified in the extremely harmonious atmosphere that has been created.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 20 lessons to observe behaviour, teaching and learning.
- Inspectors met with pupils to discuss their behaviour and lessons, and reviewed their work.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, the headteacher and other leaders, staff and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors were unable to take account of questionnaire responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) as there have not been any this year. They did speak to parents informally and take into account the responses to a recent school questionnaire for parents.
- They looked carefully at school data on pupils' attainment and progress, the school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses, procedures for managing the performance of teachers, and the school's development plan.
- Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined by inspectors.

## Inspection team

Tim Bristow, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Margaret Jones

Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.*

### Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- The school is hard federated with three other Catholic schools in Northampton. The federation is called The Thomas of Canterbury Federation of Northampton Catholic Schools.
- The school has a committee of its own governors who are part of the federation governing body.
- Approximately two thirds of the pupils are from a variety of minority ethnic heritages. An above-average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average.
- The headteacher was appointed in October 2013.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching by making sure that:
  - teachers carefully check pupils' prior learning when planning lessons so that work helps all pupils to build on what they know and can do
  - the more-able pupils are given work that challenges them to think harder and is not too easy
  - teachers plan pupils' skill development in subjects taught in topics so that expectations of the oldest pupils are higher than those for the youngest pupils.
- Improve the achievement of pupils by ensuring that:
  - older pupils get the right help to correct bad habits in their writing and spelling
  - pupils develop their reasoning skills in mathematics through tackling more open-ended problem-solving activities routinely in mathematics.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- In Years 1 to 5, pupils have made uneven progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This has been caused by weak teaching in some classes at the beginning of the school year, which has now been eradicated, and currently because teaching still requires improvement.
- The majority of children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skill development that is typically lower than expected for their age. Since February 2014, there has been a radical improvement in leadership and provision that has resulted in children making much better progress than they were. However, this improvement is too recent to increase the proportion that reach a good level of development, which is low.
- The proportion of pupils gaining the higher Level 5 has risen and is close to the national average. However, it is not better than this because the expectation of teachers and the work provided for these pupils does not stretch their thinking enough.
- Standards in writing are lower than in reading and mathematics. Improvements in teaching have resulted in the writing being more interesting and sophisticated. However, from previous years, some pupils in Key Stage 2 have developed bad habits in letter formation and handwriting, and have not developed spelling skills as well as could be expected. This is impeding their progress.
- In Year 6, the proportion of pupils who have made expected progress or exceeded expected progress is favourable. This represents good and outstanding progress for different groups of pupils in Year 6.
- Work in books and accurate school assessment data shows that the proportion of pupils making the progress they should is much higher than at the time of the last inspection.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 and 6 in reading, writing and mathematics are average. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals achieve the same standards, and sometimes higher standards, than their classmates. This is because they make good progress.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to other pupils in the school. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are making accelerated progress now as the provision for them and its leadership have strengthened.
- Younger pupils are making better progress when learning to read because staff are now teaching phonics (recognising the sounds that letters represent) systematically, following training earlier this year.

### The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching is no longer inadequate because it has improved considerably across the school. However, not enough is good. Where teaching requires improvement, the teachers do not check pupils work well enough when planning the next lessons. This results in some pupils being set work that is not pitched accurately enough at helping them to build on what they have learnt before.
- More-able pupils, in particular, are set work that is not challenging enough. Pupils were observed

who demonstrated they had already learnt what was being taught and so had to complete work that was too easy for them. At other times, they had to listen to explanations that were set at too low a level for what was expected of them.

- In mathematics, pupils are not given enough open-ended activities to develop their reasoning skills or the skills necessary to solve problems systematically. Teachers have increased the range of mathematical word problems, which is giving pupils the chance to apply their calculation skills.
- To ensure that pupils receive equality of opportunity, teachers plan work across subjects such as history and geography in phase teams. So, for example, pupils in Year 3 do the same topic as Year 4. Leaders have rightly identified that teachers need to establish a common understanding of skill progression so that expectations of the older Year 4 pupils are higher than for the Year 3 pupils.
- This year, the teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs has strengthened. In lessons, for example, pupils were observed receiving good-quality help from teaching assistants and made good progress.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teaching is much stronger than earlier in the year. Children choose from a selection of well-planned activities and then become absorbed in their play and learning.
- Teaching in Year 6 is very effective. Lessons are carefully planned based on the needs of individual pupils, and all make good or better progress. Excellent relationships have been established with pupils, who understand that teachers have very high expectations of them.
- All teachers have strengthened the advice they give to pupils when they mark their work. Work is marked to the same good standard across all subjects, including history, geography and science. Pupils readily respond to this advice and to the help that they get to overcome misconceptions in their work.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave responsibly and sensibly around the school with few reminders. They are kind to each other and respectful to adults. They are proud of the school and appreciate the improvements that have been made to their education over the last year.
- A considerable improvement is the pupils' attitude to their work in lessons. They work hard and regularly respond to the helpful advice that they receive from their teachers.
- The school is good at promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Pupils are tolerant and respectful of each other's differences. There is a strong sense of community promoted in assemblies and lessons. For example, pupils have recently composed a school prayer which celebrates their education and community. They were observed thoughtfully discussing the prayer, demonstrating a mature spiritual development for their age.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Pupils spoken to and nearly all the parents who responded to a school questionnaire agree that the school not only keeps pupils safe but teaches them how to stay safe.
- Bullying is a rare occurrence in school. Nevertheless, the school teaches pupils how to recognise

different types of bullying and how to manage it should it happen in the future. Pupils were able to explain to inspectors the correct steps that they should take if they encountered bullying.

- The exclusion rate is low and the attendance is average.
- Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are well cared for and safe. Over the last two years, the school has strengthened its provision to support these pupils.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- In the last year, the headteacher, supported by the governors and new senior leaders, has transformed the learning environment in the school very effectively. He has driven up higher expectations of teaching, behaviour and leadership, and has laid firm foundations for future school improvement.
- School leaders and governors have led improvements to teaching and learning with great determination. This has resulted in a number of teachers taking good advantage of the training on offer and demonstrating better teaching. Often, it has resulted in teachers and leaders being challenged by senior leaders because they could not meet the high expectations required. Now senior leaders and governors have built a much more effective team of teachers and leaders. Over the last two years, this has meant that pupils have experienced changes of teachers. Nevertheless, school leaders have been effective at ensuring that pupils' progress continues to accelerate.
- A year ago, management procedures were not fit for purpose. They are now much more useful at underpinning the effective leadership. Performance management is now well established, offering teachers a good balance of training, guidance and challenge. Checks on performance are closely linked to the school's priorities for improvement. Assessment information is now recorded accurately and used by leaders to ensure that the progress of all groups of pupils is accelerating.
- A number of the leaders are relatively new to their posts but have nonetheless had a marked impact on strengthening teaching and outcomes. Leaders of the Early Years Foundation Stage, special educational needs, Key Stages 1 and 2, literacy and numeracy, have been well supported by senior leaders to make a good contribution to the removal of special measures.
- Literacy is promoted well across the different subjects. Topic books are a good record of the different styles and genres of writing that pupils have been able to practise.
- Pupils enjoy and appreciate the extra sports clubs and coaching provided by the primary sports funding. They are developing skills in sports such as basketball and hockey that they had little opportunity to prior to this funding.
- The local authority has provided the necessary challenge that was required to strengthen the education and leadership in the school so it no longer requires special measures.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing committee has demonstrated that it is now effective at taking strategic responsibility for the governance of the school. Governors have increased their expertise and knowledge over the year to be equipped to fulfil this role.
  - Governors work closely with the headteacher and are uncompromising in ensuring that teachers recently appointed to the school are of the necessary quality. They also keep a

careful check on the teachers to ensure that they are rewarded at the appropriate level for their performance.

- Governors keep a careful check on the achievement of pupils. For example, they know the impact of the pupil premium and have ensured that it has been put to effective use in raising the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. Governors fulfil financial and safeguarding requirements.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	122038
<b>Local authority</b>	Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	444434

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	416
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Hugh Williams
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jon Davis
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 November 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01604 403511
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