

St Gerard's RC Primary School

Avalon Court, Hemlington, Middlesbrough, North Yorkshire, TS8 9HU

Inspection dates 4–5 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent. As a result, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable, including the most able.
- Too few pupils make consistently better than expected progress in all subjects. Standards in reading and writing are not rising fast enough.
- Information about what pupils have learnt and done well is not used well enough by teachers to tailor activities to match the abilities and needs of different groups of pupils.
- Marking does not always make clear to pupils how they can improve their work.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is variable, because leaders do not check the impact of their actions to support their learning rigorously enough. As a result, the attainment gaps with their classmates and pupils nationally are not narrowing rapidly enough.
- Pupils' behaviour requires improvement, because in a few pupils do not concentrate fully enough on their learning.
- Not all subject leaders are driving improvement in performance well enough to eradicate areas of weakness, such as spelling, punctuation and grammar and they have not yet been involved in sharing best practice in the school.
- Children in the Reception class and Years 1 and 2 are not making enough progress in learning phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) because the teaching of these skills is not systematic enough.
- Senior leaders do not check the quality of learning rigorously enough and ensure that the performance of individuals and whole groups is accurately analysed. Consequently, they do not have an accurate enough picture of pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching over time.

The school has the following strengths

- The school provides a caring and welcoming atmosphere in which young children and pupils feel safe and there are warm relationships between staff and pupils throughout the school.
- Good teaching in some year groups provides positive examples of good practice.
- Children in the Nursery class get off to a flying start and make good progress, because they are well taught.
- Pupils who are potentially vulnerable or anxious are provided with good care and support.
- An enthusiastically led and dedicated governing body are increasingly effective at holding leaders to account and senior leaders are determined to ensure that standards are improved.
- Pupils' conduct at social times is good and their attendance is improving.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 14 lessons, including five paired observations and work scrutiny carried out with the headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and undertook learning walks around the school in order to check the quality of what is provided for pupils.
- The inspectors spoke with pupils and had discussions with the headteacher, subject leaders, staff, governors, the attached school improvement partner and a senior local authority officer.
- The inspectors also examined a range of documents including those related to safeguarding, the school's view of how well it is doing, the monitoring of staff performance, the school's improvement plan and records relating to pupils' progress and behaviour.
- The inspectors took account of 16 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). They also took account of 11 responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Clive Petts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Zoe Westley

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Gerard's is a smaller than average sized primary school.
- Almost all of the pupils are of White British backgrounds. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action and the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below that usually found.
- Currently, there is a much higher than average proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for pupil premium funding. The pupil premium is funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The provision in the early years Nursery is part-time.
- The school provides a breakfast and after school club each day.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- St Gerard's forms part of the Trinity Partnership, a group of Middlesbrough primary and secondary Roman Catholic schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to speed up pupils' progress and raise their achievement, especially in reading and writing, and to improve the quality of teaching to at least good by:
 - raising the expectations of what each pupil can achieve, including for the most able and those who are disadvantaged
 - making sure that teachers use assessment information effectively, so that tasks are challenging, keep all pupils keen and eager to learn, and more younger children and pupils exceed what is expected of them
 - improving the teaching of phonics in the Reception class and Key Stage 1 and the teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling throughout the school, especially for disadvantaged pupils
 - ensuring teachers' marking corrects pupils' misconceptions, provides clear and concise feedback which challenges them to extend their knowledge and skills and deepens their understanding
 - sharing the best practice across the school so that all learning is well planned, interesting, thought-provoking and challenging.
- Improve the effectiveness of senior and subject leaders by:
 - making certain that subject leaders have the skills they need to drive improvements, make robust checks and evaluate accurately the impact of their actions to improve pupils' progress and achievement
 - ensuring that the school's system to check progress is used effectively so that staff can be held accountable for the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, children in the early years and all pupils in the school
 - making sure that the governing body has clear and precise information on pupils' performance, so that governors can use this information to hold senior and subject leaders fully to account for their work.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management requires improvement because it has not secured consistently good teaching throughout the school. The checking of the school's performance and that of teachers by senior leaders is not rigorous enough, consequently they have an over positive view of how well the school is performing.
- Subject leaders are starting to develop essential leadership skills, although some lack training and opportunities to add to their skills and take more leadership responsibility. This includes observing and checking the quality of learning in lessons and how well pupils are achieving, so that they can add effectively to the drive to improve.
- Senior leaders have identified where teaching is effective and how to build on this good work. Their determination to improve the quality of teaching has resulted in the eradication of inadequate teaching. However, they have not yet fully established a system for sharing good practice throughout the school.
- The school has suitable systems for checking the progress and development of individual pupils. Leaders are able to use information about pupils' progress to plan work. Yet, not all teachers use this information well enough.
- Checks on the impact of the school's actions are not always sufficiently rigorous to identify what is working well and what requires additional action, crucial to improving practice quickly.
- Appropriate improvement priorities have been established, although timescales and yardsticks to measure school improvement, especially using pupils' progress and achievement, are not rigorous enough. Performance management is established with a clear link between performance and salary progression.
- Progress in narrowing the gaps in achievement and progress between different groups is too variable. For example, in Key Stage 1, the gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school in reading, writing and mathematics are too wide. This is also the case for disadvantaged pupils with regard to grammar, punctuation and spelling by the end of Year 6. Although the school uses the pupil premium funding to provide extra support, this is not evaluated well enough and specific weaknesses in the learning of different groups of pupils are not pinpointed accurately or quickly enough. Consequently, equality of opportunity requires improvement.
- The curriculum is wide and varied providing a good range of interesting learning opportunities and experiences. For example, using the Second World War to imagine the plight of families when the docks on the River Tees were bombed. Despite this, opportunities are sometimes missed to practise essential skills in all subjects, such as spelling.
- The primary school sports' funding is used well to add to teachers' coaching skills, increase pupils' participation rates and extend their sporting experiences. Developing links with local providers and schools provide opportunities to develop higher level sporting skills, such as tag rugby, tennis and trampolining.
- Safeguarding meets requirements ensuring that pupils are kept safe.
- The local authority recently carried out an accurate review of the quality of education in the school and challenged leaders. It offered support in areas where it might help the school improve.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The recently strengthened governing body are supportive and very committed. They work diligently under the whole hearted leadership of the Chair of the Governing Body who has ensured a broad breadth of expertise and skill among its members. They are increasingly challenging the leadership and they recognise the importance of holding staff to account for pupils' performance. They have a good grasp of strengths and weaknesses in teaching. Their checks are rapidly improving, but they do not scrutinise the impact of teaching over time and that of the extra funding for the disadvantaged pupils rigorously enough. This is because the information they collect and receive is insufficiently analytical and precise. The governing body is determined to tackle underperformance and makes certain that there is no automatic pay progression.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Although at social times pupils' behaviour is good and the majority of pupils are keen to learn, a few pupils quickly lose concentration when tasks do not fully interest them. They become restless, inattentive and talkative slowing down the pace of learning.
- In the breakfast club, at lunchtime in the dining hall or in the after-school club, staff enjoy very good

relationships with pupils of all ages. This is because staff set really clear expectations for their conduct. Consequently, the atmosphere is happy and friendly.

- Most pupils are polite, helpful and considerate. They are aware of the value of displaying tolerance and respect. The pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures that pupils know how to look after and care for each other.
- Pupils' attendance has continued to improve since the previous inspection and is now broadly in line with national averages. This is the result of the school's effective use of a parent support worker who engaged with parents in helpful and supportive ways.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. In their responses to the online questionnaire, all parents felt that their children were happy and kept safe at school. In discussions with pupils, they report that incidents of unkind or mean behaviour are infrequent. They are aware of different forms of bullying. They display confidence recognising the risks and dangers of cyber bullying, although now and then their grasp of prejudiced based bullying is not quite so well developed.
- Pupils talk with much enthusiasm about the wide range of sport, visits and visitors they are able to experience. Older pupils willingly take on responsibilities, providing positive role models, such as when organising sponsorship funding for the school's prayer garden.
- A very few parents did raise concerns about the effectiveness with which the school manages any incidents of bullying. Discussions with pupils and the checking of the school's behaviour records reveal that when pupils do not behave well enough, prompt and appropriate action is taken.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement as it is not yet good enough over time to ensure all pupils achieve well. In some classes, activities are not planned and matched well enough to pupils' needs or to what they know and understand already to make sure that their learning is constantly built upon.
- Teachers do not always challenge the thinking of the most able pupils well enough to stretch their knowledge and deepen their understanding. Frequently, their work is not demanding enough. Consequently not enough pupils reach the higher levels, especially in reading and writing.
- When achievement is not high enough and progress rates too variable:
 - expectations of attitudes, values and behaviour made of pupils of all ages and from all starting points, are not consistently high enough
 - the level of challenge is sometimes too great or too easy, revealing inexact assessment of the next steps in pupils' learning
 - questioning does not continuously check and test pupils' understanding to identify misunderstandings
 - opportunities are missed to provide well-defined written comments about how pupils can improve their work.
- Where pupils' progress is faster and achievement higher, this is because the teachers' expectations of what all pupils can achieve are higher. In the best learning, teaching is interesting and thought provoking and motivating methods add that extra spark to learning. Activities are thoughtfully designed to stimulate pupils' interest and debate. Questioning is used constantly to stretch pupils' thinking. For example, a group of older pupils were observed totally absorbed discussing the motivation behind the plan of Guy Fawkes to blow up the Houses of Parliament, with the teacher closely following and prompting their thinking.
- Regular marking is positive, helpful and encouraging. In the best marking, illustrations are provided for pupils identifying successes and mistakes. This provides the basis for a dialogue with pupils about their work. Nevertheless, corrections are not always demanded and opportunities are missed to provide guidance which fosters faster progress.
- Additional adult support is often used well in lessons to provide pupils with well-targeted help and support. This enables pupils, including the disabled and those with special educational needs, to make meaningful contributions to discussions. For example, highly effective support is provided in the Nursery class to support younger children who are potentially vulnerable and who have complex needs and anxieties.

The achievement of pupils**requires improvement**

- The achievement of pupils throughout the school is inconsistent and requires improvement, because the quality of teaching over time is too uneven. Variable teacher expectations result in inconsistent progress and achievement, especially in reading and writing. The most able and disadvantaged pupils do not achieve well.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 national screening check on phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is below the national average. The most recent check reveals an increasing number failing to meet the expected standard. Some pupils who did not meet the standards in 2013 still did not achieve the standard required by the end of Year 2 in 2014. This is because the teaching of letter-sound relationships is not systematic enough and does not keep pupils attention.
- Although the standards reached by the end of Year 2 are broadly average in reading and mathematics and average in writing, the proportions achieving the higher levels in reading slipped significantly in 2014.
- In recent test results, standards at the end of Year 6 in 2014 were average in mathematics, broadly average in reading and writing and below average in grammar, punctuation and spelling. The proportions of pupils making better than expected progress in reading and writing was below average, although above average in mathematics. The number of pupils making more than expected progress is broadly in line with the national average in all subjects.
- The variable level of challenge for the most able pupils results in too few reaching the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because tasks are not well enough matched to their ability and make too few demands stretching their thinking and understanding.
- From their different starting points, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to their classmates. Their achievement is stronger in mathematics than it is in reading and writing.
- The school is little by little narrowing the gap in standards between non-disadvantaged and disadvantaged pupils, both within school and with similar groups nationally. In 2014 by the end of Year 6, test results revealed that disadvantaged pupils were one term behind others in mathematics, reading and writing within school and with their non-disadvantaged peers nationally. Current school Year 6 data and inspection observation evidence reveals similar gaps. However, gaps in grammar, punctuation and spelling and at Key Stage 1 were much wider both within school and with those nationally.
- The school does well in promoting an enjoyment of reading. At age six, the pupils' skills in reading confidently, fluently and accurately when blending sounds and letters together to make sense of words are below those expected for their age. Older pupils are enthusiastic readers and are knowledgeable about a wide range of authors and themes.

The early years provision**requires improvement**

- Most children start in the Nursery class with weak skills in speech, language and number. They often struggle with understanding the social skills needed for school. They make rapid progress settling into routines and developing self-control. Good progress is made developing listening, sharing their experiences with their classmates and explaining their thinking to each other and adults, such as recognising two dimensional shapes and their properties.
- Despite the flying start in the Nursery class, progress dips and is much slower in the Reception class. Consequently, the effectiveness of the early years requires improvement. This includes for the most able children and those disabled and those with special educational needs.
- Children's skills making sense of letter and sound relationships, blending sounds together to form words are a particular weakness. Despite a rising proportion of children reaching a good level of development, not enough children enter Year 1 with the essential skills they need to achieve well.
- The early years leader and staff do not check and analyse the progress of different groups closely enough. As a result, staff planning to improve the quality of learning experiences for children, including the most able is not sharply focused enough upon improving skills, especially in the Reception class.
- Imaginative activities in the Nursery class capture children's interest and motivates them to explore and investigate well. For example, one boy was observed searching through a pile of shapes for a pair of large circles for the rear wheels of his tractor, having already recognised that the front wheels are much smaller.
- Although opportunities are available for older children to be curious and investigate for themselves, too often they lose concentration, become distracted and do not work things out for themselves or with a

partner.

- Parents are encouraged to participate in their children's development and are happy to use opportunities to find out what their children are doing, especially in the Nursery class.

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	111706
Local authority	Middlesbrough
Inspection number	448750

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	154
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gamini Wijesinghe
Headteacher	Ian Walker
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2010
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