

St Gregory's Catholic Primary School

Park Road, Smethwick, B67 5HX

Inspection dates 25–26 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Achievement is good in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similarly good progress to their classmates, as do disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils' attainment in reading is particularly impressive, supported by very effective teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make).
- Teaching is typically good across subjects and age groups. Teachers make good use of information about what pupils know and understand in planning what pupils need to learn next.
- Children in the early years quickly develop their confidence and make good progress in their learning.
- Pupils feel safe in this school, where children of all backgrounds and abilities are welcomed. They work hard and behave well as a result of very good relationships with their teachers.
- The headteacher, other senior leaders and governors are uncompromising in their drive for improvement. They are supportive but challenging, and teamwork among all staff is good.
- Governors visit the school regularly to find out for themselves how well it is progressing.
- Leaders have ensured that teaching and achievement are consistently at least good and continue to improve.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well in all of the school's work. Leaders ensure that pupils understand and subscribe to traditional British values.
- Parents hold the school in high regard and say they would recommend it to others.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally the most able pupils are not given challenging enough work, and then they lose concentration and their progress slows.
- Teachers' feedback does not always help pupils to achieve higher standards, especially in writing.
- Leaders' improvement plans do not identify precisely enough the actions to be taken or how their success will be measured. This means leaders and governors cannot keep a close check on the impact of the actions in order to adapt them if necessary.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 14 lessons, including two that were seen with the headteacher.
- A number of documents were analysed, including information about pupils' current progress, the use of pupil premium and sports funding, the school's improvement plan, checks carried out by leaders on the quality of teaching, minutes of the governing body meetings, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors met groups of pupils and talked to them about their work and about life in the school. They listened to pupils read and reviewed work in books in a range of different subjects.
- Inspectors met senior and subject leaders, two governors and the local authority's school improvement officer.
- The 47 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were analysed and inspectors spoke briefly to parents as they brought their children to school in the morning. They also looked at the school's own survey of the views of parents, and four letters received during the inspection. Staff views were considered through the 27 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Lois Furness, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Susan Calvert

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Gregory's is average-sized primary school.
- Although the majority of pupils are White British, 13 different ethnicities are represented. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average, although few pupils are at the early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is extra government funding to support the education of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Children in the early years are catered for in a part-time Nursery and a full-time Reception class.
- An independent before- and after-school club operates at the school. This is not managed by the governing body and is inspected and reported upon separately.
- There have been many staffing changes since the school's last inspection in November 2006, and the current headteacher was appointed in September 2011. A new deputy headteacher joined the staff in January 2014 and in April of the same year a new early years leader was appointed. In September 2014, a newly qualified teacher started at the school.
- The school works in collaboration with three local schools with a specific focus on school improvement and training opportunities.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching, and therefore pupils' achievement, by:
 - moving the most able pupils on to harder work more quickly
 - giving pupils clear guidance in marking about how to attain higher standards
 - insisting that pupils use their handwriting, grammar, punctuation and spelling skills correctly in their writing.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - including clear actions and measures in school improvement plans, so leaders and governors can regularly check that changes are having the impact intended.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides determined and focused leadership and is increasingly involving all staff in school improvement. She is supported by an effective team, including the governors, who are ambitious to raise standards further. This has resulted in an ethos in which good behaviour is the norm, and pupils make good progress due to good teaching.
- The headteacher and senior leaders know the school well and maintain a rigorous focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Recent improvements are beginning to ensure that more pupils exceed nationally expected progress and reach higher levels of attainment, including in the early years. The school improvement plan identifies the right key priorities, but does not state clearly the actions to be completed or how success will be checked over time.
- Middle leaders such as those in charge of subjects lead their areas of responsibility well. They provide good advice to staff about changes to the curriculum and other national developments, and help them to identify and address any aspects of pupils' achievement that need attention. The early years leader has been effective in ensuring children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Teaching is carefully monitored and staff performance is managed well. Staff are given good support. The collaborative work with other schools has provided them with good quality training to improve their skills further. They feel valued and, consequently, morale is high.
- The school has introduced a system for assessing pupils' progress within the new National Curriculum, and makes good use of the resulting information to check how well pupils are doing. Half termly pupil progress meetings between the headteacher and classroom teachers help to identify where improvements could be made, and the results are used to set challenging targets.
- The subjects taught are enhanced by many additional activities such as visits and visitors to the school. This contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, preparing them ably for secondary school and for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life in modern Britain. For instance, pupils are encouraged to develop good attitudes to learning, and to learn about a variety of faiths and cultures and the differences between right and wrong.
- The additional primary school sport funding is used successfully to improve the quality of physical education. Specialist coaches take lessons, run activities and train staff. This has broadened the range of sporting activities available, for example tri golf, quick stick hockey and specialist dance. These opportunities are having a positive impact on pupils' lifestyles and physical well-being.
- Disadvantaged pupils are supported well through careful use of the pupil premium, and this is very successful in giving every child the chance to succeed and benefit from all aspects of school life. Variations in the rates of progress between different groups of pupils are being reduced. The school's excellent approach to tackling discrimination of any sort ensures the pupils understand that everyone has a right to freedom and an equal opportunity to succeed. It promotes all of these things and good relationships exceptionally well. Parents also confirm that the school operates in a very friendly, caring and supportive environment.
- The local authority provides good support through the school adviser, who visits regularly and provides accurate advice on, for example, pupil performance data. This advice has helped the governors to understand more about the school's effectiveness.
- Leaders' work to ensure pupils attend school, behave well and are safe is good. Safeguarding procedures are effective and meet national requirements. Staff show a good understanding of the child protection and risk assessment policies and procedures. Parents have positive opinions of the school's work in looking after their children.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are effective, providing an appropriate balance of challenge and support. Through a programme of 'learning walks' they find out for themselves how the school is progressing and consequently have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, including pupils' performance. For example, they are aware that children's attainment at the end of Reception dipped last year, and know that this year it is improving.
- Governors regularly review the impact of all spending, including the pupil premium and sports funding, and manage the budget well. They are knowledgeable about the quality of teaching and provide good support for the headteacher in making decisions about pay based on teachers' performance.
- Through their behaviour policies, knowledge of curriculum content, discussions with pupils and visits to the school, governors know that the values of tolerance and respect for all are strongly promoted. They are successful in preparing pupils for life in modern Britain.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite, friendly and considerate to each other and to adults. They are very proud of their school, and are eager to show visitors the good quality displays which celebrate and value their achievements and efforts.
- Pupils behave sensibly in lessons, at break and at lunch times. They have positive attitudes to learning and readily contribute their ideas. Very occasionally when the work in lessons is too easy, the most able pupils lose concentration and the pace of their learning drops.
- Pupils understand the impact of their actions on others and try to be kind and understanding at all times. Hence, the school remains a happy and welcoming place for all. These attitudes epitomise the school's motto of 'Loving and Learning'. Almost all of the parents who spoke with inspectors or responded to surveys agree that their children are happy at school.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills are developed well through all aspects of school life. Lots of opportunities for reflection about right and wrong, working together and understanding people of other faiths and backgrounds help pupils to develop tolerance, respect and friendships across a wide range of groups.
- Pupils say they enjoy school. They are punctual. The strong partnership the school has with families and the work to encourage regular attendance are having a positive effect, and attendance is above average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel safe in school because adults look after them very well. They know that adults will listen to their concerns and will do all they can to help to resolve them. Parents are confident that their children are very well looked after. The staff make consistently good use of the procedures for ensuring pupils' health, safety and well-being.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of what comprises bullying and the many forms that it can take. They say bullying is extremely rare, and are very confident that adults would very quickly tackle any unacceptable behaviour.
- Pupils have a keen awareness of the potential dangers they may face when using social media and know exactly what they should do if they have a concern. This is because cyber-bullying and the dangers of the internet are taught in assemblies, discussed in classrooms and taught in lessons.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good in reading, writing and mathematics. In lessons, pupils frequently share ideas and work in pairs, developing their social skills of listening to others and respecting others' views. Relationships are positive, so pupils want to please their teachers. Good attitudes to learning start in the

early years and continue throughout the school.

- The teaching of reading is a particular strength. Phonics (letters and the sounds they make) are taught skilfully in the early years, and throughout Years 1 and 2. Pupils who are at the early stage of learning English are supported well and quickly develop their phonic knowledge. Older pupils develop their good comprehension skills during regular reading sessions.
- Children in the early years classes are taught well. Adults plan lots of activities for children to develop their skills across all areas of learning. They note carefully what children can do before planning next steps. Similarly, teachers in Key Stages 1 and 2 have an accurate knowledge and understanding of what pupils can already do and what they need to learn next. This enables them to plan activities that ensure pupils make good progress over time.
- Teachers expect pupils to produce a good amount of work in all year groups, and their productivity is high. Subjects such as history and geography are used well to give pupils a real purpose for their writing. Staff mark work regularly and constantly praise pupils for their efforts. There are some good examples of teachers' comments helping pupils to move on, but they are not always helpful in ensuring pupils attain higher standards. Also, teachers do not routinely insist that pupils use correctly their knowledge of grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed and work in close partnership with teachers. Well-planned support ensures that any pupils who need extra help make good gains in their learning. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported sensitively in lessons. Adults work very effectively alongside pupils, checking they understand what to do, and breaking down tasks into smaller steps so they can succeed.
- The most able pupils are usually taught well in reading, writing and mathematics, and teachers plan appropriate work to deepen their understanding. Occasionally, however, they do not start this harder work soon enough to make progress at an even faster rate.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children generally join the Nursery with knowledge and skills that are typical for their age. A few, however, speak little English when they start school. These children are supported effectively and quickly develop their language skills. As they acquire these skills they are able to work successfully alongside others. Children make good progress and are prepared well to start the National Curriculum in Year 1.
- Good progress continues throughout the school. In the 2014 Year 6 national tests an above-average proportion of pupils attained the expected level for their age in mathematics, reading, and writing and in grammar, punctuation and spelling. Also, an above-average proportion attained the higher Level 5 in all four subject areas. In reading attainment was well above average. This represents good progress from their starting points in Year 3.
- At the end of Year 2 attainment is well above average in reading. In writing and mathematics it is average, although there has been an improving trend over the last three years in the proportion of pupils attaining or exceeding the expected level in both subjects. Boys did not attain as highly as girls in 2014, especially in writing, but the low number of boys in relation to girls means that the comparisons are not statistically significant.
- Reading is proving an increasing strength throughout the school. Over the last two years the proportion of Year 1 pupils attaining the expected standard in the national screening check has been well above average. Pupils throughout the school clearly enjoy books and reading. Older pupils read with confidence and with fluency, and interpret texts well.
- The work in pupils' books, displayed on walls and in the school's tracking system all confirms that current pupils are making good progress and achieving well in English and mathematics. Pupils in Year 6 clearly have good skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling. They are not always so strong in other year groups.

- As a result of the effective use of pupil premium funding, disadvantaged pupils make similarly good progress to other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. In Year 6 in 2014, their attainment was approximately two and a half terms behind others in the school in mathematics and writing, but at a similar level to others in reading. Compared to other pupils nationally, it was approximately one and a half terms behind in mathematics and writing, and one term in reading. Results show that the gap narrowed considerably from the previous year in all areas except writing. Any gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of their classmates are closing across the school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are provided for well. They make good progress as a result of the support they receive. The few pupils who are at the early stage of learning English also make good progress.
- The most able pupils generally make good progress overall, and in 2014 an above-average proportion of pupils reached the higher Level 6 in mathematics. However, the work in books shows that the most able are not consistently making the progress they are capable of in all year groups. Leaders recognise that it is a priority to ensure they are fully challenged to make more rapid progress.

The early years provision

is good

- Children make good progress in all areas of learning, and particularly in their personal development, so they are well prepared for Year 1. Supportive relationships between adults and children help develop confidence and a positive attitude to learning. During the inspection, children worked cooperatively, sharing equipment and talking confidently to each other and to adults. They spontaneously praise each other for good work and behave well.
- Teaching is good. Staff make sure that children can practise the skills they learn as they play. Well-briefed adults act as good role models in promoting spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Adults rigorously track the progress children make and use this information to plan future activities which will build on their skills and knowledge.
- Leadership and management are also good. On her appointment, the new leader quickly identified the areas needing improvement. This has resulted in good improvements to the outdoor area and the children's 'learning journey' records. Also she has ensured that the dip in attainment last year has been rectified, and this year approximately 70% of children are expected to achieve a good level of development in all areas of learning. The early years area is checked regularly to make sure children's safety and well-being are assured.

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	104002
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	453255

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.

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	237
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary O'Brian
Headteacher	Krystyna Bickley
Date of previous school inspection	2 November 2006
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Fax number	0121 4297394
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