

St Gerard's RC Primary School

Avalon Court, Hemlington, Middlesbrough TS8 9HU

Inspection dates

15–16 November 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Under the skilled and experienced leadership of the executive headteacher, ably supported by the head of school, the whole school community has worked cooperatively to provide the best possible opportunities and experiences for all pupils.
- Leaders' effective evaluation ensures that they know the school inside out. As a result, school development planning is incisive, detailed and actions are checked regularly to ensure that the impact has been positive.
- The local governing body provides effective challenge and support for the school. Governors know the strengths and areas to develop very well. However, having recently joined a new multi-academy trust, they are currently unsure as to their exact roles and responsibilities.
- Children in the early years make a good start in their learning. The proportion of pupils who reach a good level of development by the time they leave the Reception class is now broadly at the national average.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are good. The respect and care they have for each other is clearly seen in school.
- Pupils listen to each other attentively, display excellent manners and clearly love being at school. Their behaviour is very good.
- The very positive school ethos is underpinned by high levels of respect for people of all faiths and cultures. Pupils have a clear understanding of British values, including tolerance and acceptance of others. The school does not yet plan opportunities for pupils to learn about people with 'protected characteristics' (as defined in the 2010 Equality Act).
- Over time, the attainment of pupils in key stages 1 and 2 has been broadly at the national average. Current pupils are making good progress from their individual starting points. The recent progress of pupils in Year 6 has been strong.
- Teachers and teaching assistants alike are skilled at supporting pupils' learning. Ongoing strategies to further improve the teaching of phonics are beginning to bear fruit.
- Teachers generally match work accurately to pupils' varying abilities. Occasionally, the work set for the most able pupils lacks challenge, especially in key stage 1. Further work is also needed to develop pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics.
- The leadership of the well-planned curriculum ensures that pupils are enthusiastic and engaged in their learning. Systems to assess what pupils know, and can do, in subjects other than English and mathematics are being developed.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to explain and justify their thinking in mathematical reasoning activities
 - embedding new strategies in the teaching of phonics so that a much greater proportion reach the expected standard in Year 1
 - ensuring that teachers pitch work accurately for the most able pupils to increase the proportion working at a greater depth of learning, especially in key stage 1.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that members of the local governing body are crystal clear about their roles and responsibilities within the multi-academy trust
 - planning age-appropriate opportunities to foster pupils' understanding of people with protected characteristics
 - further developing systems to assess what pupils know, and can do, in creative and foundation subjects so that gaps in knowledge and understanding are quickly identified and addressed.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The experienced and dedicated executive headteacher has been unwavering in her ambition to eradicate all aspects of underperformance. Working alongside the skilled head of school, they have worked diligently to ensure a good and improving standard of education for pupils in this school. Together, they embody the whole-school ethos to provide an environment in which pupils can thrive.
- The senior leadership team shares the ambition to improve all aspects of school life, so that pupils excel, with leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, governors and the trustees and officers from the trust. Together they form a formidable team.
- The school development plan is incisive and detailed. It is rooted in accurate self-evaluation because leaders know the school inside out. It is indicative of astute and passionate leadership. Priorities are clear and measurable. Progress against these priorities is updated regularly with evidence included. This allows the local governing body to hold senior leaders to account for the effectiveness of planned actions and provide both challenge and support.
- Systems to evaluate the quality of teaching are incisive, consistent and methodical. The termly cycle of review for teachers involves a wide range of activities that include lesson observations, analysis of work in books and scrutiny of displays, handwriting and reading records. Leaders use a traffic light system against agreed, non-negotiable, elements to be seen in lessons. This ensures that teachers adhere to high expectations of performance. Leaders work assiduously to ensure that the quality of teaching improves further so that it is of a consistently high standard.
- The school's curriculum is rich and balanced. It is reviewed regularly to ensure that it meets pupils' needs and interests. The views of pupils are valued highly in this and other aspects of school life. The school's approach of using a common topic across all year groups engenders a sense of unity and purpose in learning. All classes used the First World War as a theme this term, each using its content in a different, age-appropriate way.
- Subject leaders have rigorous systems in place to assess the quality of teaching in each subject area. Teachers plan and teach subject-specific skills across most areas of the curriculum. Systems to assess what pupils know, and can do, in each subject are not yet fully secure and are being further embedded.
- Leaders and teachers make good use of visits out of school and the many resources available in the local area. These include visiting the local cenotaph, a reservoir, High Force waterfall, the transporter bridge in Middlesbrough and a World War Museum. The school provides a range of after-school clubs that further enhance pupils' access to the wider curriculum. These include the singing, computing and mathematics games clubs and various sports clubs.
- Leaders manage pupil premium spending effectively to provide targeted support for all disadvantaged pupils. Leaders and teachers know the needs of their pupils well. Regular reviews of pupils' progress provide in-depth analyses of any possible barriers to learning for those pupils who are at risk of falling behind. As a result, all pupils,

especially the disadvantaged pupils in school, achieve well.

- Effective leadership has resulted in good-quality provision for the pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Their needs are identified early by class teachers and their good progress, sometimes in small steps, is tracked accurately. The school supports these pupils well. This support is monitored very effectively every half term by the new leader of SEN. She undertakes regular drop-ins to support sessions to assess the effect of support on pupils' progress in learning. Consequently, the SEN funding is used effectively by leaders.
- The innovative use of the primary school physical education and sport funding has had a positive effect on pupils' health and well-being. A much larger proportion of pupils now engage in sport, including competitive sport, than they did prior to the funding being available. Physical activity has been introduced as a link to other subjects, such as 'active mathematics'. Pupils have a clear understanding that disability is no barrier to sporting achievement. The school has cleverly introduced pupils who were reluctant to engage in sport to new sporting disciplines to secure their enjoyment, such as through golf. Sport has also been the mechanism to develop leadership skills through the 'sports crew'.

Governance of the school

- The school benefits from a skilled, dedicated and proactive local governing body. Governors make it their business to know about the work of the school. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are able to articulate current priorities. They are rightly proud of the school's efforts to ensure the all-round development of pupils. They are also proud of the excellent standards of behaviour seen in school. They report that their top priority is the safeguarding of pupils.
- The chief executive officer and trustees of the Nicholas Postgate Academy Trust have quickly put into place a comprehensive and detailed scheme of delegation. They have organised training for all leaders, audited the skills of each local governing body and devised communication pathways to share any concerns or raise questions. They have stated clearly that schools must continue to deliver a high-quality Catholic education.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and fit for purpose. All policies, procedures and records are of good quality, up to date and maintained well by the school business manager. Staff and governors are fully trained in all aspects of child protection and safeguarding. Staff are quick to identify, report and record any concerns, no matter how small. All concerns recorded on the extensive and detailed online system are followed through effectively by the designated safeguarding leaders.
- The culture of keeping pupils safe and putting them at the heart of the inclusive, friendly school community is evident. Pupils are taught about the different sorts of bullying, including physical, emotional and cyber bullying. They are knowledgeable about racism and speak confidently about respecting everyone. They enjoyed a recent school initiative, 'different sock day', to highlight that people are different. They know

how to keep themselves safe outside school, including when online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have been rigorous and determined in their work to continually improve the quality of teaching. This has been, in part, driven by improving staff morale and developing a united and buoyant sense of teamwork. Teachers are skilled at quickly picking up on pupils' misconceptions and gaps in learning. Support is planned and put into place immediately.
- Lessons are usually lively and interesting, capturing pupils' imagination. For example, in the Year 5 class, pupils were enthralled by a short clip about the Christmas truce in the First World War. To further support pupils to write a detailed description of how a soldier may have felt in a trench, the teacher provided 'inspiration stations'. These stimuli included ice, a tray of wet mud with a boot and a bowl of corned beef. These inspiring resources allowed pupils to re-enact aspects of daily life and then create phrases such as 'black as coal' or 'frostbite nibbling fingers' to use in their description of the setting.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to structure learning effectively. For example, most pupils in the Year 4 class were able to use verbs and adverbs in their writing to draft a newspaper article on the blitz in the Second World War. The teacher's explanation and use of examples were clear and dramatic. This also demonstrated the effective way in which teachers use ongoing assessment to reshape activities to support learning, as pupils had struggled to use adverbs well the previous day.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and stick closely to the school's behaviour policy. Relationships are excellent. Pupils' very positive attitudes in lessons support their learning well. They benefit from informative and exciting displays around the school, including the hall, where there are, for example, aide-memoires displaying key information for learning in mathematics, reading and writing.
- In mathematics, staff regularly teach and consolidate the basic skills of number and mental calculation, as well as other aspects of the mathematics curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 3 could correctly use column addition to find the sum of two or three 3-digit numbers. The teacher ensured that work was pitched at an appropriate level for pupils of all abilities. This is not always the case. Occasionally, work lacks challenge for some pupils, especially in key stage 1. Consequently, there are fewer pupils working at a greater depth in their learning.
- Pupils are becoming more adept in their ability to solve word problems. However, the reasoning skills of some pupils are in the early stages of development. Not all pupils are able to independently explain their methods, or to justify and prove the accuracy of their answers. Teachers do not yet regularly plan opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning skills. Pupils' skills in explaining their thinking or their answers, such as whether something is true sometimes, always or never, are limited.
- As a result of a newly introduced system to ensure the rigorous and systematic teaching of phonics, children are making a faster start in their early reading skills. Adults are increasingly skilled in teaching well-structured lessons throughout the school. Lessons are pitched well according to pupils' reading skills. This has not always

been the case. The proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in the phonics screening at the end of Year 1 has been below that found nationally for the last three years.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and most are very keen to succeed and to produce their very best work. Pupils grow in confidence during their time in school, acquiring an assured and resilient approach to learning. Pupils say that they love school and thrive in the well-ordered and positive school environment. Displays are of good quality, bright and attractive and support learning well. The school works diligently to ensure that pupils' physical and emotional well-being are valued and developed.
- Pupils who were spoken with by inspectors confidently stated that they feel safe in school. This view was echoed by parents and carers who completed the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View. Pupils talked about the work they had completed on e-safety and recounted a recent fire alarm drill. They are well informed about the different forms of bullying, including physical and emotional bullying.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and development are good. The promotion of cultural and religious diversity and tolerance is clearly seen in school. Pupils' understanding of fundamental British values is clear, especially individual liberty and the rule of law. One pupil was keen to take the lead inspector to see the school's 'totem pole' of animal masks. Each one represents a valued attribute such as staying power, empathy, respect and generosity of spirit.
- Leaders acknowledge the need to provide more planned opportunities for pupils to foster a greater understanding of people with the listed protected characteristics in an age-appropriate way.
- Leaders plan regular opportunities to challenge modern stereotypes, especially in the world of work. Pupils know that professions such as nursing or firefighting are open to men and women. Pupils are keen to take on responsibility, preparing them to become active citizens. These include becoming an eco-warrior, part of the sports crew or chaplaincy team, the school council or a playground buddy.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils enjoy coming to this school, as can be seen in their good levels of attendance. Pupils are keen to learn and the vast majority work conscientiously. Their positive attitudes in class have a marked effect on their success in learning. Behaviour systems are known and understood by pupils and consistently implemented by teachers. Pupils know the rewards or consequences for being on green, amber or red on the behaviour charts. The very few incidents of misbehaviour are swiftly and deftly addressed.
- The parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were in

agreement that behaviour was good in school. The good relationships that are nurtured ensure that pupils conduct themselves very well in lessons and around school. Any instances of low-level disruption are rare, although not absent. Playtimes are harmonious occasions where no one is left out.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Throughout the school, current pupils are making consistently good progress in English and mathematics. Most pupils in every year group are on track to reach standards expected, or above, for their age by the end of the year.
- After a good start to learning in the early years, pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. In both recently published data and current provisional data for 2018, standards in Year 2 continue to be in line with the national average. The proportion who reached a greater depth in their learning remains just below that found nationally at the end of key stage 1, in both years.
- Standards of attainment by the end of Year 6 in 2018, as seen in provisional data, have risen considerably since last year's figures, which were broadly at the national average. They are now well above those found nationally in 2017 in reading, writing and mathematics. This is also the case with regard to the higher standard in 2018.
- Pupils are now making a good start in their early reading skills. In recent years, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards in the phonics screening check, at the end of Year 1, has been just below the national average. In 2018, this proportion dipped markedly and suddenly.
- Currently, the most able pupils in school are making good progress in their learning as most teachers provide appropriately challenging work. As a result of the effective and strategic use of the pupil premium funding, disadvantaged pupils are achieving well. Currently, most disadvantaged pupils in each year group are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school is quick to identify any pupils who are at risk of falling behind. Effective leadership and high-quality provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities ensure that most of these pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. Activities are carefully matched to their individual needs and abilities and skilfully taught, including by teaching assistants.

Early years provision

Good

- Children in the early years learn and play happily together. They are eager to explore and investigate and are happy to share. Children display good behaviour and respond appropriately to adults. Leaders are skilled in developing areas of provision, based on an accurate assessment of children's stages of development, and they maximise learning opportunities for all.
- The new early years leader is a very skilled practitioner and effective leader. She leads a talented team of adults who share the same passion and desire to see young children thrive. She has a crystal-clear understanding of the strengths in the early years and has identified key areas for improvement, based on an effective analysis of the school's

detailed and informative assessment system. There is a significant capacity to quickly improve the, already good, quality of provision in the early years.

- The vast majority of children start in the early years with skills and knowledge which are broadly typical for their age. As a result of careful observations, choice of activities, good teaching and probing questioning, most children are now making good progress and are well prepared to start Year 1. Provisional data for 2018 shows that the proportion reaching a good level of development has risen from the previous year. It is now broadly in line with that found nationally.
- The integration of two-year olds into the Nursery afternoon session has been managed very skilfully by the early years leader. Children are settled, emotionally secure and handle expectations of them very well. Adults in the Nursery setting are skilled in anticipating rapidly changing interests of children as they move around the activities provided. Children are able to take turns, share equipment and have good manners. This was seen clearly as a number of children built castles in the sand area.
- Adults observe children carefully and skilfully build upon their interests. They support children's learning through prompts and skilful questioning. They work alongside children during imaginative and creative play sessions. Children are keen to explore, investigate and follow their own interests during child-initiated activities in the indoor and outdoor learning environment. In Reception, a number of boys enjoyed role play in the class 'police station', producing written crime reports.
- Leaders have ensured that there are many opportunities for children to develop and practise their mark-making, writing and understanding of number. Teacher-led activities, both inside and outside, are carefully planned to both challenge and inspire children. Reception children worked with the teacher to write the sounds they could hear in a phonics session. Children worked hard, but not all have a correct pencil grip. Nursery children clearly enjoyed working outside with an adult to make marks with chalks to colour George the Giant's trousers.
- Safeguarding practices are extremely effective. Children are taught how to manage risks from an early age. The very effective safeguarding culture that permeates the school is equally apparent in the early years. There are no material breaches of legal welfare requirements; children are safe and well supported.

School details

Unique reference number	142373
Local authority	Middlesbrough
Inspection number	10053463

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	191
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr Joseph Hughes
Executive Headteacher	Mrs Carol Walker
Telephone number	01642 591 820
Website	www.stgerards.org.uk/
Email address	andrea.porritt@mcschools.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school became part of the Nicholas Postgate Academy Trust in September 2018.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for support from pupil premium funding is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is just below the national average.
- The school's part-time provision for Nursery children operates in the morning and afternoon. Reception children attend on a full-time basis.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards. These are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The executive headteacher and head of school have been in post for just over a year.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons, including those observed jointly with the head of school. In addition, an inspector listened to a selection of pupils from Years 1 and 2 read. Inspectors reviewed a sample of pupils' work alongside the head of school.
- Inspectors held meetings with governors, the executive headteacher and the head of school. Meetings were also held with the chief executive officer, a trustee and an education officer from the multi-academy trust. They also met with other school leaders, including subject leaders and members of the teaching staff. Inspectors met the school business manager and held a meeting with a group of pupils.
- Inspectors viewed a range of documents, including information relating to pupils' achievements over time, the school's data on recent and current progress of pupils, and the school's view on how well it is doing. Inspectors also reviewed the school development plan, documents relating to safeguarding and records of behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of the 11 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Parent View, and the 10 responses to the staff questionnaire. In addition, responses from Year 3 and Year 5 pupils to the pupil questionnaire were noted. The school's website was scrutinised.

Inspection team

Phil Scott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Kathryn McDonald

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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