

Inspection of a good school: St Gerard's Catholic Primary School

Park Nook Doncaster Road, Thrybergh, Rotherham, South Yorkshire S65 4AE

Inspection dates:

5 February 2020

Outcome

St Gerard's Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and rightly proud of their school. They are polite and courteous. Visitors receive a warm welcome. Pupils enjoy being part of this small school where everyone knows them well. Parents and carers are very positive about the care their children receive. One parent was typical of many when they said, 'My child loves school and being part of St Gerard's family.'

The school's motto, 'with Christ as our teacher, to enable every child to be the best that they can be', is threaded through all aspects of school life. Teachers have high expectations and challenge pupils to do their best. Pupils enjoy learning and they work hard. They experience exciting opportunities to learn both in and out of the classroom. For example, visits to The Deep and a butterfly house help to bring learning to life.

Leaders expect pupils to behave well, and they do. Playtimes are joyful occasions. Pupils enjoy the 'trim trail' and the many games on offer. Older pupils are excellent role models for younger pupils. They act as playtime buddies for the younger children. Pupils say they feel safe in this nurturing school. Staff listen to, and act on, pupils' views. Pupils appreciate the 'worry boxes' where they can post any concerns. They say bullying is very rare. They trust adults to help them if they have any concerns.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have maintained a good quality of education since the previous inspection. Governors, leaders and staff are ambitious for pupils. They want all pupils to achieve the very best. This includes those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Leaders prioritise reading. They have brought about significant improvements in early reading. Staff are well trained to teach to phonics. In the early years, children start to learn to read immediately. They have daily phonics lessons and regular opportunities to practise. By the end of the Reception Year, children can use phonics to blend sounds and

make words. As pupils progress into key stage 1, they continue to learn phonics in a structured way. This helps to ensure that pupils read books that match their phonics knowledge. As a result, pupils become confident and fluent readers. Pupils love reading. They say that the reading challenge encourages them to read more. In Years 5 and 6, pupils spoke enthusiastically about their favourite books, authors and planned class text.

In science, leaders have planned a well sequenced curriculum. This is improving pupils' scientific knowledge. Pupils were able to explain what they had learned about electricity in a science, technology, engineering and mathematics project.

Pupils enjoy mathematics. Until recently, the mathematics curriculum was not well developed. This has now changed. It is sequenced in a logical way that helps pupils to develop their mathematical skills. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. They check to see how well their pupils are learning. However, leaders know that some of the tasks teachers select do not consistently match their ambition for the most able pupils.

Some areas of the curriculum are at earlier stages of development. Leaders have clear plans in place for these subjects. In addition, in some of these subjects, such as art and computing, subject leaders are new to their roles. Senior leaders are helping subject leaders to develop the skills they need to fulfil their roles.

Teachers support pupils with SEND to learn as well as other pupils in a wide range of subjects. As a result, most pupils achieve well. In the past, leaders have been too slow to identify some pupils who needed external support. Leaders know this. They now ensure that they involve external agencies more promptly.

Leaders and staff promote pupils' wider development well. They work together to help pupils to become responsible citizens. Pupils say they appreciate being student councillors and 'GIFT' ambassadors. They value taking part in community events and raising money for charity. There is a strong sense of community. Pupils learn about faiths and cultures beyond their own. This helps them to respect others' views and beliefs.

In the early years, children are safe and happy. Teachers are highly skilled and knowledgeable about how young children learn. They provide children with the right opportunities so that they achieve well. Staff encourage parents to get involved in school life. At the start of the school day, many parents stay to read with their child in class.

Governors challenge and support school leaders. They check that pupils are safe and achieve well. Staff morale is high. Staff are proud to work at St Gerard's. They feel well supported and highly valued by leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff and governors take part in regular training to help them keep pupils safe. Staff know how to report any concerns about a child's welfare or safety. Leaders keep records and act promptly when staff raise concerns. However, the recording of actions is not as clear

as it could be. Sometimes this makes it difficult to check what has happened and when. All adults have appropriate safety checks before working with pupils. Staff teach pupils about how to stay safe in different situations and when online. Pupils speak confidently about how to stay safe online. Leaders work closely with external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families get support when it is needed.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At times, teachers do not plan sequences of lessons which match the ambition of the curriculum for the most able pupils. As a result, some of the most able pupils do not achieve as well as they should and could. This includes in reading and mathematics. Leaders should ensure that their planned training and support for staff is implemented so that they understand how to best deliver the curriculum for the most able pupils.
- Many curriculum leaders are new to their roles and are in the early stages of their development as subject leaders. Their approach to checking on how well pupils are acquiring knowledge and skills in their subject areas is underdevelopment. Senior leaders should continue to provide support and training to ensure that all subject leaders develop the necessary skills to carry out their roles effectively.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, St Gerard's Catholic Primary School, to be good on 12–13 September 2011.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	139877
Local authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	10110803
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	132
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Cristian Gurran
Headteacher	Bernadette Baxter
Website	www.stgerardsprimary.org
Date of previous inspection	10 March 2016

Information about this school

- The deputy headteacher is currently the acting headteacher.
- Since the last inspection there have been several staff changes.
- The school is smaller than an average-sized primary school.
- The school's last section 48 inspection took place in November 2016.

Information about this inspection

- We met with the acting headteacher, the key stage leader, special educational needs coordinator, curriculum leaders and other members of staff. We spoke to a representative from the Diocese of Hallam. We spoke to members of the local governing board, including the chair.
- We explored the curriculum by carrying out deep dives in reading, mathematics and science. This involved meeting with curriculum leaders, visiting lessons, speaking to pupils and looking at their work and speaking to teachers. We heard pupils read.
- We scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and safeguarding documents. We also evaluated information relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.

- We gathered the views of parents at the end of the school day. We also took account of the views of 42 parents who submitted free-text responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- We carried out a range of activities to check the arrangements for safeguarding pupils. Inspectors scrutinised the school's policies relating to safeguarding, spoke with the designated safeguarding leader and considered records of the pre-employment suitability checks which the school makes on its staff. Inspectors asked pupils for their opinions about safety, behaviour and bullying. Inspectors considered parents' responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey.
- We spoke to pupils, formally and informally, throughout the inspection. We observed pupils in classrooms and at lunchtime and breaktime.

Inspection team

Jean Watt, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Juliet Demster

Ofsted Inspector

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