

Inspection of a good school: St Gerard's RC Junior and Infant School

Yatesbury Avenue, Castle Vale, Birmingham, West Midlands B35 6LB

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 March 2023

Outcome

St Gerard's RC Junior and Infant School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Gerard's is a happy and harmonious community. Pupils learn that everyone is equal and should be treated with respect. Initiatives such as 'Friendship February' and 'Make me smile March' promote the importance of care and kindness. As a result, pupils get along together. They are thoughtful, polite and considerate. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary in lessons and around school.

Leaders and staff have high expectations of all pupils. They have developed a curriculum that enables pupils to achieve well in a broad range of subjects. In some subjects, pupils are already flourishing. In others, the groundwork has been done. Leaders and teachers are now refining their expertise so they can support pupils to learn equally well in all subjects.

Pupils know that adults care about them. They trust adults to help if they are stuck with their work or have any worries. Pupils feel safe. If bullying occurs, adults deal with it effectively.

Leaders want pupils to be proud of where they live. They teach them about Castle Vale and Birmingham. Leaders also want to broaden pupils' experiences beyond their local area. They do this through trips and visitors to school, which pupils thoroughly enjoy.

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

Since September 2022, the deputy headteacher has led the school as acting headteacher. He has done this with the support of a senior leader from another school. Alongside other leaders, the acting headteachers have quickly established an accurate view of what the school does well and what needs to improve. They have kept the school moving forward during a time of change.

Leaders have recently reviewed the curriculum. Subject leaders, many of whom are new to their roles, have thought about how they want pupils' knowledge to build from the

early years through to Year 6. They have set out what pupils will learn in each subject and class. In some subjects, leaders have identified the precise building blocks of knowledge that pupils need to learn. For example, in mathematics, pupils' knowledge builds lesson by lesson. Teachers make effective choices about the activities pupils will do to help them learn. Pupils achieve well.

In other subjects, teachers decide on the most important things to teach and how they will teach them. Where teachers' subject knowledge is secure, they do this effectively. Pupils develop a strong understanding of what they have learned. For example, pupils in Year 5 talked confidently about how the equator affects climate. Where teachers' subject expertise is less secure, they do not always prioritise the most important knowledge to teach. Sometimes they teach content that does not build in a logical order. Occasionally, the activities and resources that teachers choose contain inaccuracies or are of poor quality.

Leaders make sure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) can learn the same curriculum as other pupils. There is an effective process for identifying the needs of pupils with SEND. Leaders work with teachers and specialist agencies to provide these pupils with the support that they need to succeed.

The process of checking that pupils remember the most important parts of what they have learned works well in mathematics. Teachers provide extra support for pupils who need it, including pupils with SEND. This ensures that everyone is ready to learn the next thing. Leaders have started to introduce this approach in other subjects.

Pupils read in school every day. Skilled staff teach the phonics curriculum to pupils in Reception and key stage 1. They keep a careful check on the sounds that pupils know. Pupils who start to fall behind receive extra teaching each day. This teaching focuses on the sounds these pupils do not know. It helps most pupils to catch up. However, there are a small number of pupils who do not catch up as quickly as they could. This includes a very small number of pupils in key stage 2 who are still at an early stage of learning to read.

Right from the early years, pupils follow the school's well-established rules and routines diligently. Classrooms are calm and purposeful. Pupils can focus on their work and learn without disruption.

Staff teach pupils about the main world religions. Pupils are tolerant of difference. They learn to care for others, for example by raising money for charity. Leaders encourage all pupils to be physically active. Pupils enjoy taking part in a range of after-school sports clubs. These clubs are very popular, and places fill quickly.

Governors and leaders check on staff well-being. Staff work as a team and value the care that senior leaders show them. They appreciate the actions that leaders take to help them manage their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know the signs to look out for that suggest a pupil might need help. They receive regular training to keep their knowledge up to date. Staff report concerns promptly and leaders take appropriate action to keep pupils safe.

Leaders understand the context of the local community. They get to know families well and offer support to those who need it. Some of this support comes from within school. Leaders also signpost families to external services that can help.

Staff teach pupils about how to keep themselves safe in a timely way. For example, pupils in Year 6 learn about the risks of anti-social behaviour before moving to secondary school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in a small number of subjects is at an early stage of implementation. Teachers are not delivering some parts of these curriculums effectively. This means that pupils do not develop a secure understanding of some important content. Subject leaders should continue to develop their subject expertise so that they can further support staff to deliver all aspects of the intended curriculum well. They should ensure that staff have the necessary subject knowledge to make effective choices about what they teach, when they teach it, and which activities will help pupils to remember their learning.
- A small number of pupils in the early stages of learning to read do not get enough teaching and practise of the sounds they need to learn. As a result, these pupils do not learn as well as they could. Leaders should refine their approach to supporting pupils in the early stages of learning to read so that they catch up quickly.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2013.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

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	103458
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10205176
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Margaret McConnell
Headteacher	John Joseph Wilson and Alex Carroll (acting headteachers)
Website	www.stgerard.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 December 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since September 2022, the school's substantive deputy headteacher has led the school in the role of acting headteacher. He has been supported by a part-time acting headteacher from another school. A substantive headteacher has been appointed and will join the school in April 2023.
- St Gerard's Catholic Primary School is a voluntary aided school in the Archdiocese of Birmingham. Its last section 48 inspection took up place in March 2018.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken this into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the two acting headteachers and other leaders.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and

looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also looked at pupils' work and spoke with leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.

- The inspector listened to a sample of pupils in key stage 1 and 2 read, and she talked to them about their reading.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. She met with groups of pupils, and she talked to pupils in lessons and at social times. There were no responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.
- The inspector met with leaders about the school's safeguarding procedures. She reviewed policies and records relating to safeguarding and behaviour. The inspector spoke to pupils, parents and carers and staff about pupils' safety.
- The inspector met with the chair of the governing body and four governors. She spoke with a representative of the diocese and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans and information on the school's website.
- The inspector took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. The inspector spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day. The inspector also considered the responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Claire Jones, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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