

INSPECTION REPORT

ST GREGORY'S CATHOLIC NURSERY AND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Netherley, Liverpool

LEA area: Liverpool

Unique reference number: 104678

Headteacher: Mrs P Melia

Reporting inspector: Mr D J Curtis
20893

Dates of inspection: 30th – 31st October 2000

Inspection number: 224953

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary and Nursery
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Vetch Hey Netherley Liverpool
Postcode:	L27 7AG
Telephone number:	(0151) 498 4313
Fax number:	(0151) 487 3794
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Owen
Date of previous inspection:	July 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Gregory's Catholic Nursery and Primary School is situated in the area of Netherley in Liverpool and takes pupils from the ages of three to eleven. There are 168 pupils on roll in seven classes, with 89 boys and 79 girls; this is an average-sized primary school. In addition, 15 children attend the nursery on a full-time basis, with 22 attending part-time at present. The majority of the pupils are white. There are no pupils from homes where English is not the first language. There are 47 pupils on the school's register of special educational needs; this is similar to the national average. There is one pupil with a statement of special educational need. Seventy-eight pupils are entitled to free school meals; this is well above the national average. Children enter the nursery with standards which are below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Gregory's is a good school which is committed to providing its pupils with the best quality of education it can offer. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very good. Teaching is good and the school achieves well in comparison with similar schools, although standards in mathematics are not high enough. The school is well led and managed by a dedicated and enthusiastic newly-appointed headteacher who has the support and confidence of the staff and governors in moving the school forward. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils apply their literacy skills well across the full curriculum.
- The provision for children's learning in the Foundation Stage.
- Behaviour, attitudes and relationships are very good and contribute to the good progress made by pupils.
- The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are very good.

What could be improved

- Standards in mathematics should be higher.
- The use of results of assessment to plan pupils' future work.
- The provision for more-able pupils.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since the last inspection in July 1996. The quality of reporting pupils' progress in National Curriculum subjects has improved. The teaching of mathematics has improved and there is no unsatisfactory teaching in the subject. More time is now given to the teaching of science. Subject co-ordinators now have a much stronger role in monitoring and evaluating the curriculum. The school has been less successful in using the results of assessment to inform planning of pupils' future work. The quality of teaching has improved with no unsatisfactory teaching observed as opposed to 13 per cent in 1996. Standards in English and science have improved. St Gregory's remains a good school.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
English	E	A	C	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
mathematics	D	D	E	D	
science	E	B	D	B	

Similar schools are those with more than 35 per cent and up to 50 per cent of pupils entitled to free school meals.

Inspection findings are that for the current group of Year 6 pupils, standards in English and science are good and above the national average. In literacy, pupils use and apply their skills in reading and writing successfully across the curriculum, with particularly strong links to information and communication technology. In mathematics, standards are below average and they are not high enough. In particular, pupils' use and application of mathematics in investigations and problem solving is a weakness, as is their knowledge and use of times tables.

Trends in English and science show improvement, although in mathematics this is not the case. However, trends need to be treated with some caution in view of the relatively small numbers of pupils in each year group and variations in the number, within any year group, on the school's register of special educational needs.

In Key Stage 1 standards in reading and writing are average, with those in mathematics below average. Standards in science are average.

By the end of the Foundation Stage, children meet the expectations set out for them within the Early Learning Goals.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in their learning; they are supported and challenged effectively.

More-able pupils are not sufficiently challenged or extended in their learning.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good; pupils enjoy school and work hard and well in lessons. Pupils present their work to an exceptionally high standard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good; pupils behave extremely well in lessons because they are motivated to learn. In the playground and around the school, behaviour is exemplary.
Personal development and relationships	Very good; pupils are polite, friendly and very well mannered. They enjoy conversations with adults. Pupils relate well to each other and with all adults they meet.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Pupils are punctual and lessons start on time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Satisfactory	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The quality of teaching is good overall and contributes to the good progress pupils make in their learning, especially in English, and to the very positive attitudes shown by pupils in their learning. During the inspection, the quality of teaching was very good in 15 per cent of lessons, good in 50 per cent and satisfactory in the remaining 35 per cent.

Teachers set high expectations in lessons, particularly in the way pupils are encouraged to present their work. The purpose of the lesson is made clear to pupils and very effective use is made of resources to support pupils' learning. However, teachers' planning does not take sufficiently into account the learning needs of more-able pupils.

The teaching of literacy is good, particularly in Key Stage 2 where teachers give pupils every opportunity to apply key reading and writing skills in all subjects. Teaching of numeracy is satisfactory, with strengths in the teaching of less-able and average pupils who achieve well. However, more-able pupils are not always given sufficiently challenging work.

Teachers are making good use of the 'IT-Suite' to support pupils' learning across the curriculum, with very effective links made between literacy and history.

The teaching of children in the Foundation Stage, in the nursery and reception, is good and makes a strong contribution to the good progress children make in their learning and to them being happy, secure and confident members of the school.

The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good and contributes to the good progress made by these pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good, links between subjects are very effective, for example the use of information and communication technology to support pupils' understanding of the Victorians in their history work.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good, individual education plans set clear and realistic targets; the special educational needs co-ordinator, teachers and learning support assistants support pupils' learning well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good, the strong Christian ethos of the school is very evident in contributing to the pupils' relationships, values, attitudes and behaviour.
How well the school cares for its pupils	A strength is that the school knows its pupils well; provision for day-to-day welfare and pupils' personal and academic development is good. However, the use of assessment to plan pupils' future learning needs to be improved.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good; the recently-appointed headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher and staff, has a very clear vision for the school; she already has established a high and positive profile in the school. She is committed to high standards, "We want to be the best".
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory; the role of the governing body is developing well with the support and encouragement of the excellent partnership established by the new headteacher and the new chair of governors.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very effective; the headteacher has already clearly and accurately identified the needs of the school, for example the need to raise standards in mathematics.
The strategic use of resources	Very good; the school uses its resources well to support pupils' learning.

The school applies the principles of best value well. During the inspection, the quality of the accommodation, particularly leaks in the roof, posed potential health and safety risks to pupils, for example water falling on to computers in the school's IT-Suite (no pupils were present at the time).

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children make good progress. • Teaching is good. • The school is well led and managed. • The school has high expectations of their children. • The school helps their children to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provision for extra-curricular activities, particularly competitive sport. • The school raising its profile in the community. • Boys being allowed to wear long trousers.

Sixteen parents attended the meeting with the registered inspector before the inspection and 48 questionnaires were returned. Inspection findings support strongly the positive views of parents. In relation to improvements, the issue relating to extra-curricular activities appears to be linked to pupils having received coaching from only one of the two professional clubs in the city. Inspection findings are that provision for extra-curricular activities is good. The governing body is aware of parental concerns regarding falling rolls and the issue is under discussion. With regard to uniform, it is the policy of their governing body that boys wear short trousers.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils apply their literacy skills well across the full curriculum.

1. A strength of the school is the way in which teachers expect, and provide, many opportunities for pupils to use and apply their literacy skills in other subjects. Teachers place great importance on pupils applying the skills, knowledge and understanding they gain in the Literacy Hour to their learning in other subjects. In Year 2, pupils write their own mathematical problems, using correct punctuation and spelling, for example 'One day there were 14 cats and two of the cats ran away. How many cats were left?' Pupils in Year 3 use very good imagination and expression when reading a poem about a caterpillar and give an exciting presentation of the poem, with dramatic effects and music which they compose themselves.
2. Pupils in Year 4 write detailed instructions as part of work linked to design and technology, for making Halloween puppets. In Year 5, pupils use their writing skills successfully in design and technology when they evaluate biscuits for texture, taste and appearance. The teacher reminds pupils, "Check your punctuation" and expects pupils to use dictionaries to help them with their spelling. Strong emphasis is made by the teacher that pupils should give reasons for their choices; this makes a strong contribution to developing their vocabulary.
3. In Year 5, pupils use information and communication technology to support their study of the Victorians. Through the use of a website, pupils apply their reading research skills well when looking for key facts about, for example, the work of the housemaid or butler within the household at Croxteth Hall. Pupils use note-taking skills effectively and develop their understanding of Victorian times by using their research to answer questions, such as 'How were the baths filled before modern plumbing was introduced. The teacher checks pupils' understanding through careful questioning and this contributes successfully to the development of pupils' speaking and listening skills. Pupils are expected to justify their answers to questions, for example 'Why would the family not sit around the table shown in the picture?'
4. In Year 6, pupils develop links between information and communication technology, literacy and history further. In work linked to the study of the Ancient Greeks, pupils investigate a website and read the story of 'Perseus the Gorgon Slayer'. They show good reading and comprehension skills. The teacher reinforces her expectations of presentation in note-taking by telling the pupils, "I want to be able to read your handwriting when we are back in class". In creating 'Wanted' posters for 'The Gorgon', pupils combine writing and word-processing skills well; they know how to use the spell-checker facility. As a result of their good literacy skills, pupils make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of Ancient Greek myths and legends.

The provision for children's learning in the Foundation Stage.

5. Children enter the nursery at the age of three and very quickly adapt to the expectations of being 'in school' and to the day-to-day routines within the class. When they arrive each morning or afternoon, they are greeted by the teacher before confidently going to the reading corner where the nursery nurse is waiting for them. Children talk to the nursery nurse and, for example, sort books into 'hardback', 'paperback' and 'teddy bear books' before tidying them away ready for registration. Children's speaking and listening skills develop well. When looking at teddy bears, they classify them into 'biggest', 'smallest' and 'middle-sized'. They know that there is 'a big brown bear' and 'it hasn't much fur left because it's old'.
6. Relationships in the nursery are good; they are based on creating a calm, relaxed, but purposeful atmosphere in which children's confidence is developed. Adults use every opportunity to extend children's learning, for example in each child having to describe the bear in a different way to another child in the class. Children feel secure and valued and this promotes their self-esteem and confidence, with the result that they are keen to participate in all activities. Their achievements are recognised through effective use of praise. The foundations are laid in the nursery for the very positive attitudes, relationships and very good behaviour which is evident throughout the school.

7. Teaching in the nursery is good. The teacher and nursery nurse work effectively as a team which benefits children's learning. Good assessments are made of children's learning, for example in identifying who can speak in a larger group and recognising those who need more encouragement to participate. There is a very clear understanding of how young children learn. Although at opposite ends of the school building, there are very effective links between the nursery and reception class.
8. In reception, children make good progress and build successfully on the knowledge, skills and understanding they acquire in the nursery. Children show, for example, a good knowledge of fairy stories, including 'Little Red Riding Hood'. They know that the 'wolf ate grandma' and that the wolf 'dressed up as Little Red Riding Hood'. Children use picture clues to make good guesses about the content of stories; this contributes well to their speaking and listening skills. Children show good intellectual effort in answering questions.
9. Teaching in reception is good and contributes significantly to good progress made in learning. The teacher has high expectations of behaviour, with children being expected to listen, concentrate and answer questions by putting their hands up and not calling out. Relationships are very good and the teacher gives children the confidence to contribute to discussions. Children are expected to draw upon their previous knowledge when answering questions; this challenges their thinking and successfully promotes their learning. At the end of the Foundation Stage, children are prepared well for the National Curriculum.

Behaviour, attitudes and relationships are very good and contribute to the good progress made by pupils.

10. Pupils clearly enjoy school and are motivated to learn which contributes successfully to the good progress made in lessons and over time. Pupils arrive punctually and greet the headteacher and deputy headteacher with cheery 'Hellos'. On entering class, they immediately settle to an activity, for example reading, and they are calm and quiet when the register is called. In lessons, pupils listen attentively to their teachers and follow instructions well. They contribute to discussion well, but value and respect the views of others. In an information and communication technology lesson, pupils were very confident in explaining the difficulties they faced during the lesson. In the main part of the lesson, pupils work hard and well, with good concentration. An outstanding strength is the quality of pupils' presentation of work, especially handwriting and layout of charts, diagrams and tables; many exercise books are of an exemplary standard in this respect.
11. Behaviour in and around the school is very good. As a result of the expectations fostered in the nursery and then maintained consistently by all teachers, behaviour in lessons is very good. When moving around the school, for example to assemblies, pupils behave well and sensibly. At breaks and lunchtimes, behaviour is very good in the playground and dining hall. There have been no exclusions.
12. Relationships in the school are very good. Pupils are polite, friendly and very welcoming. They introduce themselves to visitors, often shaking them by the hand, and they are very quick to address visitors by their names. Pupils are keen to enter into conversation, with particular enthusiasm when the merits of the city's two soccer teams are discussed. They hold doors open for each other and visitors. Pupils relate well to each other in lessons; there are many good examples of constructive paired work, for example in working at the computers in the 'IT- Suite'. Pupils relate well to their teachers and they already have a good relationship with their new headteacher who, in turn, knows them well already. They relate well to all adults in the school, including visitors.

The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are very good.

13. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had only been in post for one month. However, she had taught at the school previously and many of the parents recall that she taught them when they were pupils at the school. Parents are clearly delighted with her appointment. In a short time, the headteacher has established a high profile with the pupils; she is around the school at key times, particularly the start and end of school. Through this, she has quickly gained a good knowledge of the pupils and knows them all by name. She is dedicated to maintaining the strong Christian ethos within the school which underpins the very positive attitudes of pupils and the support of parents.

14. The headteacher is very committed to school improvement and this is summed up well in her vision for the school which is, "We want to be the best". She has already identified key priorities for development, with raising standards in mathematics a key target. In addition, she sees the need to maximise the potential of the school's 'IT-Suite' which is a recent addition to the school's resources. She is determined to ensure that the curriculum remains balanced, with pupils having opportunities to experience the sports and arts. She recognises the need and effectiveness of having more in-service training for teachers which is organised within the school.
15. Together with the new chair of governors, she has empowered the governing body to develop its role in supporting the school. The governing body is not up to quota with its membership and chairs of committees are very determined to arrange meetings, with the curriculum committee being particularly keen to play a greater role within the school; it recognises too the need for its own training.
16. The deputy headteacher during the period when she was acting headteacher appointed the nursery teacher to the senior management team of the school; this has strengthened further the continuity within the school from when children enter to the time they leave. The seamless transition of children and pupils as the move through the school, within a strong Christian ethos, is a strength of the school which is the result of successful management over many years and on which the new headteacher is keen to build.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Standards in mathematics should be higher.

17. The results of the 2000 National Curriculum assessments for pupils in Year 6 show that standards are well below average and not as high as those achieved in English and science. Inspection findings confirm that standards in mathematics are not high enough and need to be improved. In particular, pupils' skills in using and applying mathematics in problem solving and investigations are underdeveloped. Pupils' knowledge and use of times tables is also not of a high enough standard. In addition, more-able pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable in lessons and over time.
18. In lessons, teachers plan for the whole class, with insufficient account made of the needs of more-able pupils. Teaching is having a positive effect on average and below-average pupils who mainly achieve well in lessons. However, more-able pupils are given the same work which is often too easy and not challenging. In Year 4, pupils are challenged more rigorously as the result of the teacher's expectations that pupils of different abilities should work with a range of numbers when carrying out investigations.

The use of assessment to plan pupils' future work.

19. Although the school has a good range of assessment procedures in place, including the statutory and optional National Curriculum assessments, it does not use the results of those assessments consistently to plan pupils' future learning. Teachers' planning does not take fully into account the needs of more-able pupils, particularly in mathematics.

The provision for more-able pupils.

20. At present, the school has no policy by which it identifies more-able pupils, nor does it have sufficient systems in place to plan for their individual learning needs. The lack of a policy is a contributory factor in the school not achieving the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 3¹ and Level 5² in the results of the National Curriculum assessments.

¹ At the end of Key Stage 1 the national expectation is that pupils should achieve Level 2.

² At the end of Key Stage 2 the national expectation is that pupils should achieve Level 4.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

21. To further improve the quality of education and the standards achieved, the headteacher, staff and governors should:
 - a) Raise standards in mathematics by improving pupils' use and application of mathematics in problem solving and investigations, pupils' mental arithmetic skills and their knowledge and use of times tables (paragraphs 17, 18).
 - b) Improve the use of the results of assessment to plan for the differing learning needs of pupils, particularly the more able (paragraph 19).
 - c) Write a policy for the identification and teaching of more-able pupils (paragraph 20).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

20

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	15	50	35	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	26	168
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	N/A	78

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	9	38

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.4
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2000	10	16	26

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	9	10
	Girls	12	11	11
	Total	21	20	21
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	81 (89)	77 (82)	81 (93)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	10	9
	Girls	11	12	11
	Total	20	22	20
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	77 (86)	85 (86)	77 (86)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2000	22	13	35

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	14	20
	Girls	12	8	13
	Total	27	22	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	77 (83)	63 (60)	94 (93)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	16	16
	Girls	11	10	11
	Total	26	26	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	74 (80)	74 (70)	77 (93)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	164
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21
Average class size	24

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	65

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	35

Number of pupils per FTE adult	15
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/00
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	£
Total income	424,563
Total expenditure	416,399
Expenditure per pupil	1,876
Balance brought forward from previous year	58,343
Balance carried forward to next year	66,507

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	210
Number of questionnaires returned	48

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	71	27	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	69	31	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	59	36	0	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	54	13	0	2
The teaching is good.	73	27	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	50	40	10	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	73	23	2	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	76	22	0	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	40	52	4	0	4
The school is well led and managed.	60	40	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	31	0	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	20	43	14	5	18