

INSPECTION REPORT

ST GERARD'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Thrybergh

LEA area: Rotherham

Unique reference number: 106491

Headteacher: Mrs A. Dunphy

Reporting inspector: Mr P. Edwards
21069

Dates of inspection: 18th – 19th September 2000

Inspection number: 225117

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 5 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Park Nook
Doncaster Road
Thrybergh
Rotherham
South Yorkshire

Postcode: S65 4AE

Telephone number: 01709 850568

Fax number: 01709 850568

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Chris MacCormac

Date of previous inspection: 16th September 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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|---------------------|----------------------|
| Mr P Edwards | Registered inspector |
| Mr T Hall | Lay inspector |
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Inspection Quality Division
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Gerards is a Catholic Primary School with 132 pupils on roll, 70 boys and 62 girls that is smaller than the average sized primary school. The school, which is situated in the community of Thrybergh on the outskirts of Rotherham, is a popular school and frequently over-subscribed. All of the pupils are from white ethnic backgrounds and there are no pupils who have English as an additional language. Unemployment in the area is high and approximately 25 per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average. Four of the pupils have statements of special educational needs and 33 per cent are on the school's register of special educational needs. This is above average when compared to the national figures. Most of the pupils have experienced some pre-school education prior to commencing full-time education, although their attainment on entry to St Gerards is well below average. The school has very recently become part of a small Education Action Zone comprising nine schools, a significant aspect of which is to enhance the pupils' computer skills.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. When compared to similar schools, the pupils achieve high standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they are eleven. The quality of teaching is good and the headteacher provides effective leadership. Expenditure per pupil is relatively high but the finances are used very efficiently and the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The good teaching in English, mathematics and science enables the pupils to achieve standards that are well above the national average by the time they are eleven.
- The pupils behave very well and have good attitudes towards school and work.
- The identification of pupils with special educational needs and the provision made for them is very good.
- Parents are supportive of the school, give practical help in lessons and are pleased with the standards the school achieves.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership.

What could be improved

- The pupils' attendance is below average when compared to national figures.
- The opportunities for the pupils to write at length.
- The governors' involvement in monitoring the curriculum.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The previous inspection which took place in September 1996 found St Gerards to be a good school with standards attained in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 1 above average and broadly in line at the end of Key Stage 2. Test results vary from year to year due to the small number of pupils in each year groups and the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in some year groups. However, at the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science is high. The overall good standards of teaching have been maintained with an improvement in the quality in Key Stage 2. Both of the issues from the previous inspection have been addressed successfully. The professional development of teachers has been

enhanced, enabling them to be more effective in monitoring their subjects. The staff now make effective use of assessments to plan lessons for individual children.

STANDARDS

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

| Performance in: | compared with | | | | <i>Key</i> |
|-----------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|---|
| | all schools | | | similar schools | |
| | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 1999 | |
| English | C | E | A* | A* | well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E |
| mathematics | B | E | A* | A* | |
| science | A | B | A* | A* | |

The 1999 test results for seven year old pupils shows that their achievements in reading, writing and mathematics is well below the national average. However, there is a significant number of pupils with special educational needs in this year group and assessments on entry to the school indicate that most pupils have made good progress. The test results for eleven year olds in the same year show the performance of pupils in English, mathematics and science to be in the top five per cent of schools nationally. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 in English and science tests is above the national average and very commendable. The school places great emphasis on all pupils achieving their potential and this is reflected in the number of lower attaining pupils who achieve standards in line with the national average in English, mathematics and science. The attainment of the children when they start in the Reception class is below that seen nationally but they make satisfactory progress. The school is well on course to meet the challenging targets it has set in English and mathematics at age eleven.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the school | Good. The pupils are keen to learn, talk enthusiastically about their work and enjoy coming to school. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Very good. The pupils behave very well in lessons and behaviour in the playground is very good. The pupils are very polite and the atmosphere in the dining room is very pleasant. |
| Personal development and relationships | The relationships between the pupils and between the pupils and staff are good. The older pupils are mature and sensible. |
| Attendance | The pupils enjoy coming to school. They are punctual ensuring a brisk start to the day and to lessons. However, the attendance rate at the school is below the national average due to frequent absences by a |

| | |
|--|---------------------------|
| | small minority of pupils. |
|--|---------------------------|

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils: | aged up to 5 years | aged 5-7 years | aged 7-11 years |
|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 17 lessons seen overall | Satisfactory | Good | 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.

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. In the lessons observed, 53 per cent of the teaching was good and 18 per cent was very good. The rest was satisfactory. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed. The good teaching was observed in both key stages whilst the very good teaching was in Key Stage 2. In the Reception class, the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught effectively and the children make satisfactory progress towards achieving the recommended Early Learning Goals. Throughout the school considerable emphasis is devoted to the teaching of reading skills and this ensures that most pupils are fluent readers by the age of eleven. The teaching of numeracy and writing are also well taught, although the school recognises that the pupils would benefit from more opportunities for writing at length. The teaching of those pupils with special educational needs is good and they are provided with support that enables them to achieve standards commensurate with their ability. The higher attaining pupils achieve well and the teachers have high expectations of what they can achieve. The marking of the pupils' work in Years 5 and 6 is of the highest quality. The work is marked clearly and the pupils are left in no doubt as to how well they have done and what they need to do to improve.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment. |
|---|---|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Good. All statutory requirements are met. Good emphasis is placed on reading, writing and numeracy. The pupils would benefit from being given more opportunities for extended writing activities. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | Good. Assessment procedures are well established and the needs of the pupils are met very effectively. Those pupils with more severe needs are provided with a good level of support that enables them to make the progress of which they are capable. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | The school makes very good provision for the pupils' personal development. Assemblies are used effectively to develop the pupils' spiritual awareness. The pupils' involvement in a range of community activities enhances their social and moral development. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | There are good procedures in place for monitoring the welfare, health and safety of the pupils. Child protection procedures are good. The procedures for assessing the pupils' achievements in literacy and numeracy are good and have a positive impact on the pupils' learning. The very high quality of assessment evident in Years 5 and 6 could well be extended to other classes. |

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | The school is very well led by the headteacher. She is given good support by the staff and governing body. There is a very positive ethos that enables all of the pupils to develop their skills in literacy and numeracy and provide them with opportunities to develop these skills in other subjects. The small number of teachers means that they have to take responsibility for several subjects and they do so with enthusiasm and skill. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | The governors fulfil their responsibilities effectively. They are enthusiastic, very supportive and set a clear direction for the school's work. They have an in-depth knowledge of the school's finances and a very clear understanding of the work of the school. They are well placed to take a greater lead in monitoring the effectiveness of the curriculum. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | The school is very effective in monitoring its performance in National Curriculum tests and makes effective use of a wide range of assessment data. It makes comparisons with local and similar schools and makes full use of additional staff to improve standards. The headteacher regularly monitors the quality of teaching. |
| The strategic use of resources | Very good use is made of the staff and learning resources. Over a number of years the school has made judicious use of grants and other monies to enhance the quality of its buildings and the pupils are taught in a very pleasant learning environment. The governors are very effective in making the best use of the available funding. |

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The standards of work attained by their children. • The leadership demonstrated by the headteacher. • The quality of teaching. • The behaviour of children at the school. • The pleasant atmosphere, positive ethos and the ease with which they can approach the school. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few parents would like to see a greater range of activities outside of lessons. |

The inspection team agrees with the positive comments made by the parents. There is a good range of out of school activities that encompasses sport, music and dance.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The good teaching in English, mathematics and science enables the pupils to achieve standards that are above the national average by the time they are eleven.

1. The 1999 National Curriculum test results show that the pupils' achievements in English, mathematics and science are well above the national average at the end of Key Stage 2. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 and the higher Level 5 in these tests puts the school in the top five per cent nationally. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 in mathematics is close to the national average, above average in English and well above average in science. The size of cohorts is relatively small and there is variation from year to year. Nevertheless, the evidence is clear that the pupils make good, and often very good, progress, from a starting point of low attainment on entry to the school.
2. The literacy and numeracy strategies have been implemented very effectively throughout the school. The teachers have great confidence in the strategies and this is evident from the enthusiastic way the subjects are taught. The children in the Reception class are given an appropriate introduction to both literacy and numeracy with activities that are very well matched to their maturity and attainment. This gives the pupils a good foundation for further learning. The headteacher's belief in the importance of reading skills is shared by the staff. As a result, the strong emphasis placed on developing the pupils' understanding of phonics and the importance of teaching reading skills is carried on well into Key Stage 2. Good emphasis is placed on developing the pupils' mental arithmetic skills and this enables the pupils to be secure in their mathematical understanding. Science is taught regularly and effectively throughout the school.
3. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is usually good and frequently very good towards the end of Key Stage 2. The teachers have very good knowledge of the literacy and numeracy strategies and they plan their work well to meet the needs of all pupils. The teachers are enthusiastic and enjoy their work and the happy atmosphere motivates the pupils to do well. Pupils are expected to behave well and to work hard and most live up to these expectations. In a very good Year 5/6 science lesson the teacher's enthusiasm ensured the pupils were quickly absorbed in the task of preparing a 'fair test' to determine the properties of different powders. The group activities were well designed so that all pupils were challenged. As a result, their understanding of a 'fair test' was enhanced and they made good progress in their ability to pose questions, record their findings and compare results.
4. The teacher's marking of the pupils work in Years 5 and 6 is of a very high quality – indeed some of the best that has been seen. The pupils' work is marked very clearly and they are told what they are achieving and, importantly, how they can improve. The pupils undertake regular assessments in English, mathematics and science and their results are fed back to them. The pupils are aware of the National Curriculum level at which they are working and what is required to enable them to achieve the next level. This encourages the pupils to work hard and to improve their work.

The pupils behave very well and have good attitudes towards school and work.

5. The pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They show high levels of interest and enthusiasm during lessons, and speak with confidence when answering questions or talking to their peers. When asked, the older pupils stated that they liked coming to school and were keen to talk about the activities that they enjoyed most. They spoke enthusiastically about visits that had

taken place at the beginning of term. The very good standards of behaviour in the school reflect the high expectations of the staff. The high standard of behaviour observed during lessons was also seen in the playground where the pupils played happily and sensibly with one another.

6. Relationships among pupils and staff throughout the school are very good, generating an atmosphere of warmth and friendliness. The pupils work and play happily together and are appreciative of one another's achievements. Encouragement is used to good effect by the teachers, spurring on the pupils to achieve even higher standards.

The identification of pupils with special educational needs and the provision made for them is very good.

7. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is higher than is seen nationally and the school has developed good procedures to ensure that their needs are met. The school undertakes assessment on entry to the school and this is used in conjunction with other assessments to ensure that the needs of the pupils are met. The school complies with the procedures in the Code of Practice and follows procedures rigorously. Each pupil has an Individual Education Plan that is clear about their needs; how they will be met and how their progress will be measured. Indeed, in National Curriculum tests at the age of eleven, a significant proportion achieve standards in line with the national average. Pupils with more severe learning difficulties are provided with a high level of adult support to enable them to take a full part in the National Curriculum.

Parents are supportive of the school, give practical help in lessons and are pleased with the standards the school achieves.

8. In the questionnaire completed for the inspection and in their meeting with inspectors, the parents expressed a very high level of satisfaction with the standards achieved in the school. Those parents whose children had joined the school other than at the age of five felt their children had made significant strides since joining the school. They have confidence in the leadership, the teaching and the ethos of the school which they say is very welcoming. The parents are interested in the school and support their children very effectively through homework activities. A number of parents help in classrooms and most support their children when they are involved in fund raising activities for charities.

The headteacher provides very good leadership.

9. The headteacher is a very effective leader who knows her staff and pupils well. She has a clear understanding of what the school does well and how things can be improved. There is a determination to improve the achievements of all pupils and the staff are given guidance and support as to how this can be effected.
10. The headteacher and governors have a very clear understanding of the school's financial situation. Over the years, many alterations to the buildings have been undertaken and these have considerably improved the learning environment for the pupils. These improvements have been made possible through the shrewd financial management of the headteacher and governors. Grants have been applied for, funds obtained through business opportunities and monies carried forward to fund the plans. This careful planning has enabled additional teaching spaces to be created, improved the office facilities and considerably enhanced the outside play areas. The improvements have been carried out whilst maintaining a favourable pupil teacher ratio and increasing the number of learning support assistants.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The pupils' attendance is below average when compared to national figures.

11. The pupils arrive for school on time and the lessons start punctually. There are, however, a minority of pupils who take holidays during term time or have absences for other reasons. As a result, the percentage of authorised absence is well above the national average. This has a negative impact on the progress and achievements of a small group of pupils. Absences during the weeks of National Curriculum tests are particularly regrettable as they give a false impression of the school's achievements.

The opportunities for the pupils to write at length.

12. The staff have provided more opportunities for the pupils to write at length as a result of their evaluation of test papers and there has been an improvement in the pupils' performance. This is particularly evident in the work of the older pupils where there are good examples of stories, letters, essays, playwriting, interpretation of information, diaries and historical and scientific reports. The standards demanded by this teacher are high and, as a result, the pupils produce good quality work. This very good practice should be extended to all classes and staff should ensure that they plan opportunities for the pupils to practise the writing skills in all subjects.

The governors' involvement in monitoring the curriculum.

13. The governors are regular visitors to the school and a very good relationship exists between them and the staff. The governors have played a significant role in supporting the school and ensuring that the learning environment is attractive and that the needs of the pupils are effectively met through the provision of resources and staffing. They have been key to obtaining grants for improving the buildings and they play a significant part in the school's strategic planning. Parents are not always aware of the role the governors play in the life of the school and this could be made more explicit by their involvement in preparing the annual report to parents.
14. With the advent of the literacy and numeracy strategies, the governors have begun to take a much greater interest in the subjects of the curriculum. They are aware of the targets that have been set and the school's progress towards achieving them. There is a need for them to develop their understanding of the whole curriculum, particularly in view of the reintroduction of the statutory curriculum and an impending change in leadership at the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

15. The school should now:

1. Provide the pupils with more opportunities for extended writing activities by:
 - ensuring all classes devote additional time to writing activities;
 - extend the writing activities to cover all areas of the curriculum;
 - make greater use of computer technology to aid writing activities.

2. Ensure the governors develop a greater understanding of curriculum issues by:
 - making use of the training opportunities offered by the Local Education Authority;
 - receiving regular reports from subject co-ordinators;
 - encouraging governors to visit classrooms to see the subjects being taught

3. Improve the pupils' attendance by:
 - making parents more aware of the importance of regular attendance;
 - discouraging the taking of holidays during term time;
 - ensuring parents are aware of the difference in the school's rate of attendance and the national average.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of lessons observed | 17 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 8 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| | 18 | 53 | 29 | | | |

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

| | YR – Y6 |
|--|---------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils) | 132 |
| Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals | 33 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

| | YR – Y6 |
|---|---------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 4 |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 44 |

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 | 7.7 |
| National comparative data | 5.4 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 0.1 |
| 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

| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| | 1999 | 13 | 11 | 24 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | Reading | Writing | Mathematics |
|---|----------|---------|---------|-------------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above | Boys | 9 | 8 | 8 |
| | Girls | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| | Total | 17 | 16 | 16 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above | School | 71 (70) | 67 (60) | 67 (60) |
| | National | 82(80) | 83(81) | 87(84) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above | Boys | 8 | 9 | 9 |
| | Girls | 8 | 8 | 9 |
| | Total | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above | School | 67 (70) | 71 (60) | 75 (60) |
| | National | 82(81) | 86(85) | 87(86) |

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| | 1999 | 8 | 5 | 13 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|----------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above | Boys | * | * | * |
| | Girls | * | * | * |
| | Total | 12 | 12 | 13 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above | School | 92(38) | 92 (31) | 100 (69) |
| | National | 70(65) | 69(59) | 78(69) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above | Boys | * | * | * |
| | Girls | * | * | * |
| | Total | 10 | 10 | 12 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above | School | 77(38) | 77(31) | 92 (69) |
| | National | 68(65) | 69(65) | 75(71) |

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

* Numbers omitted due to the small number of pupils in the year group.

Ethnic background of pupils

| | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | |
| Black – African heritage | |
| Black – other | |
| Indian | |
| Pakistani | |
| Bangladeshi | |
| Chinese | |
| White | 132 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | |

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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) | 6 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 22 |
| Average class size | 26 |

Education support staff: YR – Y6

| | |
|---|-------|
| Total number of education support staff | 10 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 175.5 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Financial year | 1999/2000 |
| | £ |
| Total income | 263577 |
| Total expenditure | 261276 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 1878 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | -701 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 1600 |

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 132 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 47 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 70 | 28 | 2 | | |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 68 | 25 | | | 2 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 62 | 36 | | | |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 42 | 40 | 8 | | 4 |
| The teaching is good. | 66 | 32 | | | |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 60 | 30 | 6 | | 2 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 72 | 25 | | | |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 70 | 28 | | | |
| The school works closely with parents. | 55 | 38 | 4 | | |
| The school is well led and managed. | 79 | 15 | 2 | | |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 70 | 23 | 2 | | 2 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 47 | 25 | 17 | | 8 |

Other issues raised by parents

There were no other issues raised by the parents.