



St Gerard's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106941
LEA Rotherham
Inspection number 277665
Inspection dates 25 January 2006 to 26 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Bill Keast CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Park Nook Doncaster Road Thrybergh
School category	Voluntary aided		Rotherham, South Yorkshire S65 4AE
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01709 850 568
Number on roll	131	Fax number	01709 855 948
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr C MacCormac
Date of previous inspection	18 September 2000	Headteacher	Mrs P Lunn

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 25 January 2006 - 26 January 2006	Inspection number 277665
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

This, smaller than average sized school, is situated in an area of significant social deprivation. A higher than average proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Nearly all pupils are of white British origin. A very small number of pupils have a home language that is not English but this is no barrier to their learning. For the last four years the school has experienced major disruptions to staffing. This is now stabilised. The headteacher was seconded here in September 2005 and was later confirmed in post. The school is part of an Education Action Zone.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspection evidence confirms the school's own evaluation that its effectiveness is satisfactory. The school provides satisfactory value for money. Standards at the end of Year 6 in 2005 were broadly average. These pupils had made generally satisfactory progress, although it was lower in science and mathematics than in English. Progress is best in the early years and Year 6, where teaching has been least affected by disruption to staffing. The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, although standards are well below average. The quality of teaching is satisfactory but assessment and target setting are not related sufficiently closely to the National Curriculum. The school provides a good curriculum with strengths in the provision for physical activities and additional experiences beyond the classroom. Pupils' personal development is sound with a particular strength in their social development and interactions. Pupils behave and attend well, they feel safe and enjoy coming to school. Their learning needs and difficulties are identified and tackled well. The leadership and management of the new headteacher are good. The recent self evaluation is honest and accurate. Actions to tackle identified weaknesses have begun and are already showing a positive impact on progress in writing. The school works closely and effectively with its partners in the family of Catholic schools and in the Education Action Zone. It has the capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

Building on its new and stable staffing, to improve the progress that pupils make in Years 3 to 6, the school should:

- identify where pupils' learning should be at the end of each year, for them to make the expected progress, and develop pupils' understanding of what these targets mean
- assess pupils' work in a way that is more closely related to these targets and give pupils more focussed guidance on how to improve their work
- help parents to be more involved in their children's learning by the routine sharing of the immediate targets given to pupils
- improve the quality of teaching further by incorporating these more effective assessment procedures.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils join the school with below average standards. A significant minority has well below average standards. Children make satisfactory progress in Reception, although standards at the end of the year remain below average with communication, language and literacy standards being lowest. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 but still enter Key Stage 2 with below average standards. Fewer pupils than nationally reach the higher levels. Following a drop in 2002, standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are rising slightly faster than the national trend. In 2005, standards by Year 6 were

broadly average. Following a significant drop in 2002, standards have been rising more rapidly than nationally. Standards in English, mathematics and science were broadly average. Within English, standards in reading were better than in writing. The school met its targets in English but not in mathematics. Overall, pupils made satisfactory progress. This was an improvement on 2004. However, greater progress in English masked poorer progress in mathematics and science. Progress was similar for all groups of pupils and was not dependent on gender, attainment or learning difficulty and/or disability. Pupils made most progress in Year 6, where teaching has been consistent and strong.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils say, and parents confirm, that they like their school and enjoy coming. Their attendance has improved and is above average. Pupils' behaviour is good. Their personal skills are often quite weak when they arrive but develop well within the Christian ethos. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong, they have a developing understanding of their worth as individuals and their good social development is reflected in their attitudes to each other. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds participate well in all aspects of school life. Pupils said they feel safe and, while unaware of any bullying, are clear about the action they would take if any became apparent. They know that what they eat contributes to a healthy lifestyle. They have set up a healthy tuck shop. However, healthier options at lunchtime did not find immediate favour. Pupils are aware of the value of exercise and attend extra-curricular activities to support this. They satisfactorily develop skills for their future economic well-being as they progress in basic skills and improve their concentration and ability to learn. Their contribution to the school and wider community is good. They enjoy being members of the school council and feel that their input has an impact on school life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory with some strengths. Continual staff changes have had a particular impact on the learning of pupils in Years 3 to 5 and adversely affected their progress. Where teaching has been stable, in the early years and Year 6, pupils have made better progress. Teachers plan work carefully to provide different levels of work to meet the often wide range of pupils' needs. Teaching assistants are used effectively. Increasingly, teachers share with pupils what they are to learn and this helps everyone to recognise effective learning. Teachers use assessment information well to plan what they do next. Pupils are well supported in their learning and praise is used well, if sometimes excessively, to encourage them. Pupils enjoy their lessons and generally concentrate well. Their behaviour and the changeovers between activities are managed well. Pupils say they are given helpful targets to aim for to improve their work. These targets are not sufficiently evident as annotations to pupils' work. Only

pupils in Year 6 have an understanding of National Curriculum levels. Elsewhere, pupils do not have an understanding of what they should be aiming for, based on their end of Year 2 attainment, and assessment is not sufficiently linked to National Curriculum criteria.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides an appropriate curriculum which meets national requirements. This is enhanced by the teaching of French in Year 6 through co-operation within the Catholic family of schools. Provision and planning in the Foundation Stage responds effectively to the weak personal and social skills of many children when they arrive in school, with carefully linked classroom and outdoor activities. The needs of all learners are met effectively. A good range of extra-curricular activities is enthusiastically attended by pupils. Attendance at these is monitored and pupils who have not yet chosen additional physical activity are encouraged to do so. Provision for physical education and supporting activities is good. Wholehearted involvement in the local Education Action Zone has generated teaching and resources support which has directly contributed to pupils' experiences. The curriculum is enhanced by educational visits in every year group and a residential opportunity for Years 5 and 6 makes a good contribution to their social development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Secure child protection procedures follow local authority guidelines. Staff have been trained and more is planned. Appropriate checks and risk assessments ensure pupils' safety. The provision the school makes to encourage a healthy lifestyle and to enable pupils to contribute to the school and the wider community are good. Pupils are known as individuals and their needs are well understood. Teachers and skilled teaching assistants work well together to meet effectively the needs of pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school makes good use of additional staff and external agencies to help support pupils. Target setting and the guidance that is given to pupils about how to improve their work has recently begun to improve but targets are not yet sufficiently closely related to National Curriculum criteria. Pupils are not sufficiently aware of what is expected of them to help them take more responsibility for their own learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The new headteacher provides good leadership. Her clear vision for the school is shared by staff and governors. However, the contribution to leadership of the large proportion of new teachers remains to be developed. The school places clear emphasis upon the value of the individual and works hard to remove any barriers to pupils' learning. Three children with Down's Syndrome have successfully worked their way through the school.

Senior leaders monitor teaching and planning and guide teachers on how they might improve. An accurate self-evaluation has been undertaken by the new headteacher. The weakness in the progress made by pupils was identified and action was taken to tackle it. A more effective system to track progress is evolving and already there is clear evidence of improvement in writing. There is now recognition of the need to identify what pupils should be able to do at particular stages between Year 2 and Year 6 if they are to make the expected progress. Steps towards this are being put in place. The school improvement plan reflects these new priorities. Governors discharge their responsibilities satisfactorily. They are strongly supportive of their school and have ensured compliance with statutory requirements. While managing finances effectively, they have not been sufficiently challenging on pupils' progress. Resources are used effectively to support learning. The opinions of pupils and parents are canvassed and school planning incorporates these views. Staffing is stable and is adequate to meet pupils' needs.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming and helping me when I visited your school. I really enjoyed talking to you about your work and finding out about the things you like doing and what your school is doing for you.

You told me that you enjoyed your school and what it does for you. Your attendance has improved. I saw that your behaviour is good and that you get on well with each other. Through the school council, you have made a difference to your school because teachers listen to your views and act on them. Your teachers are working hard, despite the staffing difficulties there have been, to help you all to learn. They know you well, understand the difficulties some of you have with learning and work well with the teaching assistants to help you overcome your difficulties. They provide a lot of opportunities outside the classroom that you told me you enjoy. The opportunities you have for physical education and other activities are good. You have a good new headteacher who has a very clear idea of what she wants for you. She and your teachers have begun to make some changes to help you learn better because, particularly those of you in the top three classes, can make even more progress than you are at moment.

To help you make this greater progress I have asked your teachers to decide what each of you needs to be able to do by the end of each year and to help you understand what this means. I have asked them to mark your work in a way which shows you how well you are doing so that you and they can see how quickly you are reaching these goals. They will give you written targets and guidance about what you need to do next to move forward and these targets will be shared with your parents so that they too can help you learn. These targets will not only be in literacy and numeracy but in your other subjects as well.

As your teachers work to make their teaching and your school even better, you can help by listening carefully to what they say and continuing to work hard and helping each other.