



St Gregory's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134667
LEA Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number 282638
Inspection dates 5 July 2006 to 6 July 2006
Reporting inspector Gerald Griffin AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Spring Garden Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Longton
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Stoke On Trent ST3 2QN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01782 235340
Number on roll	415	Fax number	01782 236147
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Anne Thompson
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs Eileen Rogan

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Gregory's Catholic Primary is a new school that opened in September 2004 as an amalgamation of neighbouring infant and junior schools. Pupils' standards on entry are similar to those usually found. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below the national average; however, many of them are at the early stages of learning English when they start school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below the national average as is the proportion eligible for free school meals.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Gregory's is a satisfactory and improving school. The headteacher provides good leadership and this has ensured the school has made a good start. She is providing the school with clear direction and purpose and is setting challenging targets and as a result standards are rising. Middle managers give sound support although their skills in judging the quality of the work in their areas are underdeveloped. The school's leadership and management are satisfactory. Its own evaluation of its overall effectiveness as satisfactory is accurate. The drive to improve standards, supported by a good governing body, provides the capacity to make further improvements. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Pupils' attain average standards by the time they leave and achieve satisfactorily. Standards in reading are above average because pupils read a wide range of books. Standards in mathematics are a relative weakness, although they are rising. Provision in the Foundation stage is satisfactory and children attain average standards when they finish Reception.

Behaviour is good both in lessons and around school. Pupils are very polite and considerate to each other and to adults. They feel safe and very well cared for. Their contribution to the community is outstanding, shown by the many ways they support school and each other. One Year 6 pupil said, 'The best thing about school is being able to make friends and helping them.' Pupils enjoy the many extra-curricular activities provided. They are very proud of their school.

Pupils enjoy lessons and work hard. There are some very exciting lessons in which pupils make excellent progress because the teacher's planning is outstanding. Occasionally, there are lessons where progress is slow because the work provided by the teacher does not sufficiently stretch pupils.

Parents rightly feel that the school has good care arrangements. The school works well with the local high school and support agencies. The few vulnerable children are well provided for. The school sets challenging targets for pupils but teachers' marking does not always show clearly enough how they can be reached in mathematics.

What the school should do to improve further

- Sharpen teachers marking to raise standards in mathematics.
- Ensure that the work given to pupils is consistently matching their needs.
- Make sure that middle managers play a full part in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and they attain average standards at the end of Year 6. Standards are rising and the school reached its challenging targets for Year 6 in 2006. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make similar progress.

Children make satisfactory progress in Nursery and Reception and nearly all reach the expected national standards by the time they start Year 1. Pupils with limited English skills make good progress in communication because of the specialist language support they are given. Standards are broadly average at the end of Year 2. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 given their starting point. The best progress is made in English, shown by pupils' good expression when they read out loud and the wide vocabulary they use in their accurately formed sentences. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress in Years 3 to 6. They make particularly good progress in reading and standards are above average. This is because teachers' good planning ensures they read a variety of appropriate books. Additionally, pupils get good support in their reading from home, a practice strongly encouraged by the school. As a result, pupils read fluently and with confidence from a wide range of texts.

Standards in mathematics are average but are a relative weakness in all years because pupils are not consistently given enough help as to how they can improve their work further.

Throughout the school those pupils at an early stage of learning English consolidate their good start and make progress similar to other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, together with their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They respond very well to the school's strong Catholic environment and their spiritual development is outstanding. Pupils reflect maturely on issues such as beauty and belief. They respect and value each other and the world around them, and have a well developed moral code that underpins their good behaviour.

Pupils enjoy school, especially practical lessons. They feel safe and report that bullying is very rare. They are confident in approaching a member of the school's staff if they have a worry and say their concerns are quickly and effectively dealt with. Pupils are proud of the work of the school council, and describe excitedly how they have organised a 'worry box' and helped to plan more lunchtime activities. Pupils have an outstanding sense of community and are very keen to take responsibility and help others. For example, pupils hear each other read, younger pupils are monitors and older ones run stalls at the school fair. Their active involvement in such work, and their sound development of basic skills, equips them well for later life. Pupils understand clearly the need to eat healthily and take exercise. They do their best to put this into practice

in their choice of lunches and in their enthusiastic participation in physical education lessons and games.

Attendance levels are good. This is because of rigorous monitoring procedures and the wide use of encouragement and rewards.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and as a result, pupils make sound progress. The quality of teachers' planning is too variable. In most lessons, activities are well matched to pupils' needs and ensure all make progress. Work is challenging and engaging and class discussions are very effective. All pupils' contributions are valued and developed by the teacher giving pupils confidence and, as a result, their answers get better and better. In a small minority of lessons, planning is weak and work does not match pupils' learning needs. This means higher attaining pupils lack sufficient challenge while lower attaining pupils struggle with work that is too difficult for them. As a result, pupils make too little progress.

In all lessons, relationships between pupils and staff are very good which leads to pupils having good attitudes to their work. Teaching assistants understand the needs of pupils well and provide effective support to those with learning difficulties so that they can take a full part in lessons and make similar progress to others. The teaching of English is better than mathematics because marking in English clearly show pupils how they can make their work even better.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum generally builds effectively on pupils' prior attainment and experience. It is broad and balanced and meets the needs of most pupils. For example, there are good opportunities for gifted and talented pupils to develop their special skills. The English curriculum is well planned and provides a wide variety of demanding and interesting work that broadens and extends pupils' literacy skills.

Rising standards indicate that recent changes to the mathematics curriculum to provide more relevance and challenge are being effective. The good personal, social and health education programme supports pupils' personal development well. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of trips and visits to places of interest and sports and other clubs that are well supported by pupils. The school provides a wide number of joint activities for parents and pupils such as the very popular 'cook and eat sessions'. These opportunities greatly extend and develop pupils' interests and aspirations.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support of pupils are satisfactory. Care and support are good. Sensitive support and care are provided for pupils with learning difficulties or medical problems. This enables all pupils to participate fully in lessons and make satisfactory progress. The good level of support also extends to those pupils who are at an early stage of learning English and helps them to get off to a good start. The school cares for vulnerable children well by making good use of external agencies and specialists to promote their welfare when the need arises. Learning mentors support pupils' behaviour and personal development well. The home-school link teacher provides good support for families. Child protection procedures are secure and health and safety arrangements are robust. Assessment and tracking procedures are satisfactory and improving. Pupils are set challenging targets in all their subjects and the school closely monitors their progress towards achieving them. If a pupil's progress slows extra help is provided. However, pupils' understanding of their targets is variable. In English, pupils' self-assessment and teachers' marking provide them with a clear picture of their progress and areas for improvement. These practices are inconsistent in mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher's good leadership has been instrumental in establishing a happy Christian community with a very positive outlook. Her astute leadership has ensured the process of amalgamation has not consumed all the school's energy and that improving standards remain the principal focus of the school. The drive to improve standards is supported by middle managers but at the moment they do not play a big enough part in checking and evaluating work in their areas. The school is sensibly planning to provide training to help them to become more involved.

The school uses monitoring and evaluation effectively to identify its strengths and weaknesses. As a result, measures are in place to improve standards and achievement, teaching and learning, academic guidance and leadership and management. A well planned programme of professional development for staff supports these actions. While it is too early to see the full impact of these measures, there are many signs of improvement and the school clearly has the capacity to develop further.

The school actively seeks the views of pupils and parents and readily responds to their concerns. For example, parents feel that steps taken to improve communication between school and home are successful.

Governance is good. Governors have a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school through their monitoring visits and their detailed understanding of data. They effectively challenge the school on its performance and are thoroughly committed to raising standards.

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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?	3	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	NA	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?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	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	3	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	2	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 us to your school and being so friendly. You clearly value being in a school in which and you all get on so well and help each other. We enjoyed our conversations with you about your work and the other things that you do at school. We have judged that the school provides you with a satisfactory education and that it is improving.

Here are some of the 'highlights'

- You enjoy your learning and work hard for your teachers.
- You are very polite and well behaved.
- All of the staff care for you very well.
- You do very well in reading.
- You have a good understanding of the importance of eating healthily and taking exercise.
- You enjoy the good number of extra activities such as visits and clubs which the school provides.
- Your headteacher is improving the school.

What we have asked your school to do now

- Help you to make better progress in mathematics.
- Make sure teachers plan work that helps everyone achieve well.
- Ensure that those teachers with responsibilities for subjects check on the work that you do.

Best wishes for your future and the future of the school.