



St Gregory's RC Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108716
Local Authority South Tyneside
Inspection number 288164
Inspection dates 6–7 February 2007
Reporting inspector Kathryn Dodd

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Harton House Road East
School category	Voluntary aided		South Shields, Tyne and Wear
Age range of pupils	4–11		NE34 6DZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 4552909
Number on roll (school)	216	Fax number	0191 4568281
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Winnie Moad
		Headteacher	Mr Ken Smithson
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pupils attending this average sized school are from very mixed social backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The headteacher has been in post since before the previous inspection, although the staffing team has recently undergone significant change, as a result of promotions and long-term absences.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with an accurate view of its own effectiveness. It has many outstanding features. Pupils reach consistently high standards and, given their relatively low starting points, achievement is good. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make outstanding progress. Their good academic achievement and outstanding personal development signposts a very bright future for the pupils. Key to the school's success is the outstanding leadership of the headteacher who, in his pursuit of excellence, is driven to ensure that every child is nurtured in an exceptionally caring and supportive environment. Making sure that pupils enjoy learning, keep themselves safe and healthy and play an active part in the community, all have a high priority in the curriculum and in the day to day life of the school. It is no surprise, therefore, that the school enjoys a good reputation with parents and within the locality.

Pupils throughout the school, including those in the Foundation Stage, make good progress as a result of good teaching and learning. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. From a below average starting point, children achieve well. As a result, the vast majority reach the expected levels in their personal skills, communication, language and mathematics by the time they begin Year 1. The rate of pupils' progress across the school, however, varies. They make most rapid gains in Years 1, 2, 5 and 6. In these classes, teachers use the information they collect about pupils' achievement very effectively to make sure that activities in lessons consistently challenge pupils of all abilities. This good practice, however, is not evident in Years 3 and 4 where more able pupils in particular do not always achieve as well as they should.

This is a school that knows itself particularly well; leaders use the information from checking pupils' progress and have a good view of the strengths of teaching and learning in order to pinpoint where further improvements are needed. In this respect, no stone is left unturned and the school has begun to tackle the issues relating to slow down in some pupils' progress. The school community thrive on the challenge to achieve more and to reach improvement goals. As a result, standards since the last inspection have continued to be high and the school has improved well, particularly in relation to pupils' achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) and the quality of the curriculum. This demonstrates that the school is securely placed to improve further and gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers in Years 3 and 4 make good use of assessment information when planning lessons to ensure that pupils of all abilities are consistently challenged to improve in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The achievement of girls and boys of all ages is good, and standards are consistently well above average. When children start in Reception, their attainment is below what is typical for their age, particularly in their language skills. A strong focus on personal, social and emotional development ensures that they get off to a good start. By the time children enter Year 1, most attain the learning goals set nationally. In Years 1 and 2, pupils make rapid progress and standards are above average by the end of Year 2. Standards in reading and mathematics are particularly high because more pupils attain higher than expected levels in these subjects than in writing.

By Year 6, standards are consistently well above average. In English, however, pupils do better in reading than in writing, because fewer more capable pupils reach a level higher than expected for their age. Progress between Years 3 and 6 is uneven with most rapid gains in Years 5 and 6. School leaders have recognised this and taken action to improve the consistency of teaching and adjusted the curriculum aimed at raising standards of writing, particularly that of boys. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make outstanding progress. At the last inspection, standards in ICT were not high enough. They have improved well and pupils' achievement is now good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils really enjoy school and are proud of their achievements and those of their peers. The way that they show great respect for others and manage their feelings and relationships is an example of their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are extremely polite and friendly and their behaviour is excellent. In this harmonious and safe school environment, pupils' aspirations are continually raised, so that they mature into confident young people who always try their best. Older pupils are wonderful role models for younger ones. 'Pastoral care captains' take on their responsibilities willingly and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to help make their school a happier, safer and healthier place to be. Attendance is good, but the school continues to work hard to promote better attendance and particularly in dissuading parents from taking children on holiday during term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall. Enthusiastic teaching makes a strong contribution to raising standards and pupils' good achievements. Pupils respond very well to lively and stimulating activities and rise to the high expectations of them to work hard. Teaching is of particularly high quality in Key Stage 1 and in Years 5 and

6 and pupils make great strides in their learning. In Years 3 and 4 however further improvements to teaching and learning are required to ensure that all pupils make progress at the same rate as elsewhere in the school. This is because information about what pupils already know and can do is not used well enough when teachers are planning activities. Consequently, work often lacks sufficient challenge and too many pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Very warm relationships and effective communication between teachers and classroom assistants, particularly to support pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, are strong features of most of the teaching. Teachers make particularly good use of the school's information and communication technology equipment to support pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection and includes much better provision for ICT. Teachers use information from tracking pupils' progress particularly well in order to adapt the curriculum to pupils' learning needs. A strong focus on speaking and listening skills, drama to inspire and motivate pupils, especially boys, and more opportunities to practise writing in other subjects, all promote higher achievement in writing. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make outstanding progress because the support programmes boost their learning. The provision of a rich, interesting and varied curriculum for all pupils has very high priority. Pupils of all ages participate enthusiastically in an impressive range of exciting activities that greatly enhance and enrich the curriculum; for example, astronomy and digital photography. These, and many other activities, make a strong contribution to pupils' outstanding enjoyment of school, so that they develop excellent attitudes towards future learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are securely in place. Staff know pupils very well and pupils are confident that staff will help them overcome any difficulties. Pupils show exceptional care and concern towards one another. Pupils say that they feel part of 'one big family, where everyone takes special care of one another'. Pastoral care groups contribute significantly to this. Older pupils show sensitive concern for the welfare of younger ones, helping them to feel safe in school. Staff are dedicated to providing the very best support and guidance for every child. In their quest, they track pupils' achievements well and intervene rapidly if learning is too slow. Well-trained and knowledgeable classroom assistants contribute well to the outstanding progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Effective communication between school, home and with pupils ensures that everyone is kept well informed of how well pupils are getting on and of their future learning targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. He is inspirational and successful in sustaining the school's track record of high standards and outstanding personal development. Parents are confident that their children receive a high quality education in a very caring, safe and happy environment. Members of the management team thrive on challenges to achieve more and to reach improvement goals. In pursuit of excellence, rigorous monitoring and evaluation of pupils' achievement is always a high priority. The deputy headteacher and assessment coordinator make a significant contribution to this aspect of the school's work. Active governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. New governors and staff who have recently taken on additional responsibilities for watching over subjects are keen to make a greater contribution, particularly to support school improvement planning and to evaluate successes. Although modest in its self-evaluation, this is a school that knows itself particularly well. As a result, leaders are focussed on the most important priorities, particularly to improve pupils' writing, and to ensure consistently good progress across the school. Improvement since the last inspection is good, particularly achievement in ICT, and the quality of the curriculum. The school is well placed to improve further.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

St Gregory's RC Voluntary Aided Primary School

Harton House Road East

South Shields

Tyne and Wear

NE34 6DZ

8th February 2007

Dear Pupils

Thank you so much for the very warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school. I really enjoyed finding out why you enjoy coming to St Gregory's so much. You all answered my questions really thoughtfully. I can see why your parents told us that they are so pleased that you come to this school, and why they are so very proud of how well you do. I was very touched by your wonderful singing in assembly and thoroughly enjoyed your drama performance. Your behaviour is excellent all the time and you work hard in your lessons. I can see that you know a lot about keeping yourselves healthy and I am pleased so many of you take part in lots of sporting activities. I am particularly impressed with the way in which you all look after one another; you all are so kind and caring, particularly helping younger children to feel really safe and happy in school.

Your headteacher is doing an excellent job. Together with the other staff and governors, he has a clear idea of how to make your school even better. I am particularly pleased that you could tell me that you know that the many chances you get to take part in drama and to discuss your work with one another are helping you get better at your writing. You also get lots of chances to do other interesting and exciting things in school, especially the many clubs you can attend outside your lessons. There is just one important thing that I have asked your school to do. This is to make sure that your work is never too easy or too hard, but always gives you the chance to show what you are really capable of, so that you reach your targets more quickly. You can help your teachers by making sure that you tell them how you have found your work. When teachers set you targets to aim for, you should make sure that you know what they are, and keep checking what you still have to do to reach them.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Kathryn Dodd

Lead inspector