



# St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 111339  
**Local Authority** Cheshire  
**Inspection number** 288930  
**Inspection dates** 7–8 March 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Saleem Hussain

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Well Lane
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Alsager, Stoke-on-Trent
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		Staffordshire ST7 2PG
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01270 875770
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	206	<b>Fax number</b>	01270 882141
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr Kevin Fox
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Rosalyn Caulfield
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 March 2001		

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

This is an average sized school and most pupils come from advantaged homes. The percentage of pupils taking free school meals is below average, as is the percentage with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average. Attainment on entry to Reception is above average. The school recently gained the Inclusion Quality Mark and gained an Artsmark Silver Award in 2004.

Since the last inspection, there has been change in the leadership with a new headteacher taking up post in 2003.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Gabriel's is a good school with some outstanding features such as pupils' personal development, which is remarkable. Parental comments include 'I love how well all the children get on together, older ones look after younger ones, it's like one big family.' Parents have very positive views about the school because they are made to feel that they are partners in the education of their children. Standards have been significantly better than the national performance since 2002. Progress is good across the school, including in the Foundation Stage. Children in the Reception class develop high levels of confidence and independence through a stimulating provision. Pupils continue to do well and by the end of Year 6, standards are above average in science and high in English. In mathematics, even though standards are above average, some of the most able pupils could achieve at a higher level. The school successfully embraces the Every Child Matters agenda and is achieving some outstanding outcomes. This is due to leaders, managers and staff doing everything possible to ensure that pupils enjoy school life through an outstanding curriculum and effective teaching. Pupils learn to choose healthy and safe lifestyles and are particularly well prepared for the future through outstanding personal, social and health education. Pupils benefit exceptionally well from taking on responsibilities such as membership of the school council. This gives them much self-confidence and satisfies their great desire to put as much as possible back into the school community. The quality of teaching is consistently good with some outstanding features. This ensures that pupils learn and achieve well across the school. Leaders and managers have developed excellent partnerships with other schools and outside agencies. This contributes to the outstanding curriculum which capitalises on opportunities for learning through the community. For instance, teachers from a nearby high school support learning very well by frequently leading lessons in information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics and science. A new system of assessment has recently been introduced and procedures are developing positively. For instance, teachers are setting broad learning goals for different groups of pupils in all lessons. However, there is some fine tuning to be done to ensure that pupils, particularly the most able in mathematics, achieve their full potential. Leadership and management are good at all levels. The headteacher is an inspirational leader and is highly respected by staff, pupils and parents alike. Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation of its effectiveness. Rigorous monitoring, evaluation and strategy development is effective in maintaining high standards of teaching, care, and guidance. For example, the school has put strategies into place to improve the performance of the most able in mathematics. In view of improvements since the last inspection and rigorous self-evaluation at all levels, there is good capacity for further improvement. The school provides good value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in Years 3 to 6 for the more able pupils in mathematics.
- Make better use of assessment information to set more specific learning targets for all pupils, especially in mathematics, and ensure that pupils know how to improve.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils achieve well because of consistently high standards of teaching across the school. Attainment on entry to Reception is above average and by the time children go into Year 1 they achieve well, exceeding expectations for their age in all areas of learning. Progress by the end of Year 2 is consistently good. Standards are above average overall in reading, writing and mathematics and are exceptionally high in writing. The more able girls performed better than the more able boys in Year 2 in 2006. The school does all it can to bring boys' attainment into line with that of girls. For instance, good teaching assistant support in the classroom is frequently focused on boys, and the gap is narrowing. Good progress is continued throughout Years 3 to 6, and standards are high in English and above average in mathematics and science. However, some of the most able could be stretched to achieve higher standards in mathematics, which was also the case in the 2006 national tests. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they are well supported in the classroom.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

The personal development and well-being of pupils is outstanding, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is 'a place where pupils are filled with a love of life and learning', as the school vision describes. The exceptional quality of relationships permeates the school so pupils feel very much part of the school family, they feel safe and their behaviour is exemplary. As one pupil commented, 'We know the place is here for us.' This is why they love coming to school and why their attendance levels are exceptionally high. Pupils benefit from a very close tie with the church, and value their own faith and that of others. Pupils learn to appreciate the rich diversity of cultures around them because there is much opportunity for them to find out about the traditions and customs of others through the curriculum. This results in pupils' impressive qualities, which shine through in their writing and include empathy, inquisitiveness and a keen sense of justice. Pupils are very well motivated and they soak up any learning opportunities they find. They are exceptionally disciplined in their participation in the vast range of sporting activities, in which they are very skilled and which they really enjoy. They know the importance of a healthy diet and some of the youngest pupils chat with their classmates about the number of pieces of fruit and vegetables they have eaten during the day. Through the school council, the pupils learn how to make a difference, record matters formally and make decisions that benefit everyone. The skills pupils learn prepare them particularly well for future life.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good with some outstanding features. This ensures that pupils achieve well. Pupils make good progress in lessons and show outstanding attitudes to their work. There is particular strength in giving pupils interesting and practically based activities. For instance, an outstanding Year 6 science lesson about electrical circuits included making a switch and then sending morse code messages. Pupils enjoy 'brain gym' activities and good relationships are promoted especially well through talking partners, where they learn much from each other. Teachers' good subject knowledge ensures that teaching points are effectively made. Skilful discussion leading and questioning provides generally good challenge and the brisk pace of lessons means that pupils stay interested and produce much work. Pupils work very hard and take great pride in their achievements. Assessment procedures have changed recently. There is scope for teachers to make better use of information to set more specific targets for groups in lessons, especially in mathematics.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. This is because the school builds consistently well on pupils' skills and knowledge by tailoring activities to the vast majority of their needs, nurtures their talents, and includes everyone. The quality of provision in English is outstanding, leading to exceptionally good achievement. The school's impressive range of enrichment and extension activities includes plenty of educational visits, visitors and specialists, and a huge range of sports and arts that inspire and excite pupils. The many extra-curricular activities are taken up with much enthusiasm, and as one pupil commented, 'We'd like more but there aren't enough hours left.' Provision for pupils to learn about health and safety is comprehensive and there is thorough teaching of the school's excellent programme of personal, social and health education. This is why pupils have a very good understanding of lifestyle choices and how to keep safe and why they keep their fitness levels high. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. There are some outstanding exploratory activities which engage and delight the children, but these are not yet reflected outdoors because of building plans. Transition links with the parish playgroup and the high schools make a valuable contribution to provision. Specialist teaching in ICT, music and mathematics in particular is helping to improve achievement of the more able pupils.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

The school takes exceptionally good pastoral care of pupils and provides good quality support, including for those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils from different minority ethnic groups are well integrated. The school fulfils its aims

to help all pupils to develop, mature and deal with mistakes and challenge beneficially in a positive climate of care and trust. The school works particularly well with parents and outside agencies to ensure that pupils make good progress. Procedures for the care, safety and protection of pupils are in place, including those for risk assessment. Guidance for academic progress is good. Pupils benefit from knowing what they are to learn in lessons and from discussions about their work which tell them how well they are doing. Although broad goals are set out for groups of pupils in lesson plans, few know precisely what they should aim to attain.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher works tirelessly to ensure that all staff are successfully focused on maintaining high standards. Inclusion is at the heart of the school's work and equality of opportunity is well promoted. Senior staff and the governing body set a clear direction for the school and strengths and areas for development are well known at all levels. The governing body supports the school well by acting as a critical friend and using its expertise, particularly in improving provision for ICT. Self-evaluation is rigorous and generally accurate. Excellent procedures are in place for stakeholders to express their views on whole-school matters. Teaching in ICT was highlighted as an area for development at the last inspection and effective training has led to good improvement. Although progress in mathematics was not as good as in other subjects in 2006, an extensive programme of additional teaching and support in mathematics is having an impact and leading to good progress. The school is aware that a few of the more able pupils could do better. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teaching results in a consistent quality of teaching across the school with excellent practice emerging in several areas. Resources are generally well used to support learning. For instance, all pupils have access to ICT facilities and interactive whiteboards, which are effectively used in lessons.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	2
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**

First, may I thank you all for making the inspectors feel so welcome in your school. You were really helpful in the discussions we had with you. The inspectors realised the moment we walked in through the door that the children at this school are outstanding young citizens. Your behaviour is excellent. You always try to help each other and get on very well together. We thought your personal development was outstanding. The government says that 'every child matters'. In your school every child does matter and we were very pleased to see how much you enjoy learning, what excellent choices you learn to make about healthy and safe lifestyles, and how well you are preparing for the future. You are also making an excellent contribution to your community. The other things we found out about your school were that you are achieving well because of all the effort you put into learning and the good teaching you receive. We think that the learning opportunities you have through the outstanding curriculum are a very important reason for your good achievement. We like the family atmosphere in your school and have thanked the staff for the very good care they provide. We can see why you think so much of your headteacher. Along with other staff and governors we think that the school is in good hands. There is room for some improvement. Some of you in Years 3 to 6 can do even better in mathematics. I also thought that teachers could make even better use of all the information they keep about your progress. For instance, they might set even more challenging targets for you in lessons, particularly in mathematics, for those of you who learn quickly. You can help by always doing your best. Once again, thank you for making the inspectors so welcome - we really enjoyed our visit.