

St Gerard's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111706
Local Authority	Middlesbrough
Inspection number	289032
Inspection date	11 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Rosemary Rodger

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	142
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Gerard Robinson
Headteacher	Mrs Eileen Shovlin
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2002
School address	Avalon Court Hemlington Middlesbrough TS8 9HU
Telephone number	01642 591820
Fax number	01642 594069

Age group	3-11
Inspection date	11 July 2007
Inspection number	289032

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small primary school on the outskirts of Middlesbrough serves an area of high social and economic deprivation that is reflected in the above average proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. Most pupils are of White British heritage with a very small number of pupils of other heritages. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has achieved many awards in recent years including the Gold Healthy School Award, Football Charter Mark, Activemark and most recently the Gold Arts Mark. On entry to the Nursery, children's skill levels are low.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Gerard's RC Primary is a successful school that is summed up well in the comments of several parents, 'This is a wonderful school in which our children all become well rounded individuals and in which their interests and hobbies are encouraged and developed through the broad and balanced curriculum.' This is a good school. It has outstanding features. It provides good value for money because pupils achieve well from their low starting points in the Nursery. By the time the pupils leave school at Year 6, they attain standards that are broadly in line with national averages and attain challenging targets. The school's results in the recent national tests show that good progress has been made throughout the school, although actions to improve writing are not yet having sufficient impact on raising standards. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding because of the very positive impact of additional support to meet their particular needs and the very detailed records of their progress. Quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are good. The Nursery and Reception aged children work together with effective small group support to help them develop good speaking and listening skills. Parents are very appreciative of the arrangements to involve the whole family in the school's activities.

The pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. This is very effectively spearheaded by the superb attention to healthy living through sport and a healthy diet. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to eat healthily and keep fit. They say they feel safe and secure in school because, 'The teachers are always there for you and make you feel comfy in class.' Playground buddies provide support outside if pupils feel unhappy. Attitudes to learning and pupils' behaviour are exemplary and add much to pupils' progress. Pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education because of the close links with other schools and joint ventures; such as the performance with all Year 6 pupils in local schools.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers are skilled at asking probing questions and have very effectively implemented strategies to encourage pupils to talk confidently and express their views; this has been a recent successful priority. Teaching assistants make a substantial contribution to the school through their excellent support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Assessment arrangements are generally exemplary, from the detailed informative marking of pupils' work to the thorough records that track progress term by term. These show that pupils are making the progress of which they are capable. An exception is the cumbersome assessment arrangements and the recording of children's progress in the Foundation Stage. Throughout the school, pupils benefit tremendously from their outstanding curriculum, whether they are winning musical festivals or designing outfits for performances. Arrangements to give care, guidance and support to the pupils are exemplary. There are very detailed arrangements to safeguard pupils and effective use is made of outside agencies to support them.

Leadership and management are good. There is a strong sense of teamwork underpinned by the considerable and unassuming strengths of the headteacher's vision and high expectations. Self-evaluation is generally an accurate reflection of the school but is unduly modest in the judgements on the quality of the curriculum and the care, guidance and support for pupils. The school has a good capacity to improve and has made good improvement since the last inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing.
- Provide a more manageable system for recording children's progress in the Foundation Stage.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6 and pupils' achievement is good. Children have low starting points when they start school, particularly in their early literacy skills. Despite good progress in the Foundation Stage, they do not reach national expectations by the end of Reception. They make good progress in Key Stage 1 and 2 and by the time they reach Year 6, standards are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. More able pupils reach the higher levels and achieve well because of challenging targets and good teaching. Standards in writing are slightly lower than in other subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress because of the excellent extra help they are given. For these reasons, pupils have maintained their good achievement over several years. Standards are rising throughout the school. For example, indications from the school's records and inspection evidence indicate that standards are rapidly improving by Year 5.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. There is a palpable air of calm and a strong ethos that enables all pupils to flourish and enjoy their time at school. As a result, pupils are respectful, care for each other, demonstrate excellent attitudes and behave exemplarily. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily and understand the impact of this on their bodies. They feel safe and free from any tensions in their play because 'buddies' look out for any problems and provide a welcome security. The high priority to pupils' well-being is evident in the Gold Healthy School and Activemark awards. Pupils' sense of the wider community other than the school is very evident in their confidence and talents that are exceptionally well reflected in their participation in musical festivals and performances. Pupils are very well prepared for their future lives and show great confidence in discussion about their new schools. There are several pupils who represent the school on a city wide 'community kids' project team' where they are encouraged to discuss matters of interest. Attendance has improved considerably in the past few years and is now almost up to the national average because of the concerted efforts of the school to tackle this. The school has met the challenging attendance targets set by the local authority.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils are well motivated to learn because of the innovative ways teaching captures their interest; for example, as they argued their case against an unpopular proposal in a literacy lesson. Questioning is frequently probing and makes sure that all pupils are included. Lessons are well planned and teaching assistants make a very worthwhile contribution to assisting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils understand what they have to learn because this is usually prominently displayed and clearly

explained. Pupils are not always given sufficient guidance to assist their understanding of the type of writing expected and occasionally pupils are not challenged as much as they could be in literacy.

Marking is exemplary and provides pupils with good guidance on how to improve their work and in some instances is used to review prior learning and what pupils need to target next. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good and provides a good balance between adult led group work and the opportunity for children to choose for themselves what to do. A recently introduced priority to improving speaking and listening is making a good contribution to the youngest children's learning. Assessment arrangements in the Foundation Stage are complex and include several systems that have not been reviewed. This makes the use of the information and the tracking of pupils' progress overly time consuming.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The excellent curriculum provides pupils with a wide range of opportunities to extend their learning from one subject to others. This is particularly strong in art and design, well reflected in the very recent Gold Arts Mark award. The school is festooned with examples of costumes and artefacts made to enrich understanding of different periods in history or to provide props for the wealth of performances and festivals in which the pupils attend or take part. Enrichment through music is a great strength. All pupils learn to play the recorder with some playing the guitar or violin too. A high priority is given to promoting basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology to equip pupils well for their roles in later life. There is a high priority given to developing an awareness of their role in protecting the environment through the 'eco warriors' appointed throughout school. Pupils take part in several after-school activities with the priority to healthy living effectively fostered in the sporting activities, which resulted in the award of the Football Charter Mark.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for its pupils. A range of very effective support programmes are in place to help pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They make excellent progress as a result. Staff are caring and committed to the safety and care of their pupils. Arrangements to safeguard pupils meet requirements. There are very close links with parents who are kept well informed of their children's progress. The arrangements to assess the pupils' progress are exemplary at Key Stage 1 and 2 and provide precise information on how well pupils are doing and what they need to do next. This information is used exceptionally well to target those pupils who need additional support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership of the school is successfully focused on raising standards and promoting enrichment activities and enjoyment of learning. Teamwork is a strong feature of the very committed staff, governors and the headteacher. Self-evaluation is collaborative and takes full account of the views of parents and pupils. Leadership knows exactly what needs to be improved and is making all the necessary improvements with some rigour. This is well reflected in the

improvements since the last inspection. There is very thorough monitoring of pupils' learning. Subject leaders in literacy and numeracy, for example, have checked the quality of teaching and marking. As a result, actions are taken to tackle weaknesses, either through training or support in school. Equality of opportunity is excellent. All pupils are treated with equal levels of respect. This was well summed up by pupils' comments that, 'Everyone's race is respected in this school: no-one is treated differently'. The school is well resourced, apart from the provision for outdoor learning in the Foundation Stage. Arrangements are already in hand to rectify this so that pupils have even better opportunities for learning outside. Parents are very pleased with all the school does for their children and the community. Governors are fully included and provide a good level of support to the headteacher as well as acting as a critical friend when necessary.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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?	2
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

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	3
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.

Annex A

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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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

12 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Gerard's RC Primary School, Hemlington, Middlesbrough, TS8 9HU.

I am writing to let you know about my visit to your school recently. Thank you all for making my short visit so memorable. The art and design work you have produced is excellent. I really enjoyed listening to some of you playing, 'Sheep May Safely Graze' on your recorders. It is one of my favourite pieces of music. Your school is good with some outstanding features in your personal development and well-being, curriculum and how well you are cared for, guided and supported as you go through school. You all work hard and enjoy school. There are so many exciting things for you to take part in. You are able to try so many different activities and have good teaching and leadership that ensures you work hard and do as well as you can in everything you do.

There are some things you can do to make your school even better. I have asked that you improve your writing. You can help by making sure that you always try your best. Some of your teachers have been asked to make their records a bit more manageable then they will have more time to work with you.

Have a wonderful summer holiday and good luck to all.

Best wishes

Rosemary Rodger

Lead Inspector