



The Catholic School of Saint Gregory the Great

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115731
Local Authority Gloucestershire
Inspection number 290321
Inspection dates 15–16 January 2007
Reporting inspector Graeme Bassett

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Knapp Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Cheltenham
Age range of pupils	4–11		GL50 3QH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01242 513659
Number on roll (school)	402	Fax number	01242 237870
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Nicky Febery
		Headteacher	Sharon M Aston
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Catholic School of St Gregory the Great is larger than most primary schools and is situated in the centre of Cheltenham. The number on roll has recently increased significantly. The school admits children from a wide area of the town. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. Children's attainment on entry to the school has dropped since the last inspection and is currently in line with expectations but there are some who have weaker literacy skills. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is average and there is an increasing number of pupils learning English as an additional language. The school has been awarded an Activemark for physical education. The deputy headteacher and a second senior teacher were appointed in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school where pupils work and play together harmoniously. The school has experienced many disruptions since the last inspection but these problems have now been resolved and leadership and management are driving ahead with new developments to raise standards and achievement. The growing number of pupils has been managed well. The governing body and headteacher have created a strong senior leadership team and the leadership and management are satisfactory and, in some aspects, good. The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher and senior teachers, provides clear guidance and support for school development. They have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. New staff and senior appointments have brought new ideas to the work of the school and staff are working steadily to create a cohesive team.

The school is endeavouring to improve the role of subject leaders but currently responsibilities are underdeveloped, especially for English, mathematics and science. The school is now well set to raise standards and achievement, and its capacity for improvement is satisfactory. However, some recently instigated improvements have not yet had time to show a significant impact on raising standards. Pupils' achievement is improving and is now satisfactory by the end of Year 6 but too few pupils exceed the expected levels for their ages, resulting in standards in English, mathematics and science being broadly average.

Teaching is satisfactory and sometimes good, especially in the Foundation Stage classes. However, teachers' expectations are not always high enough and more able pupils are not challenged sufficiently. Although assessment records are used in all classes for English, mathematics and science, they are inconsistent and do not provide sufficient detail to enable teachers to plan precisely what they need to teach each pupil next.

The curriculum is satisfactory, with good enrichment provided by links with the community and also with clubs and special interest weeks. Links across subjects, especially in the development of pupils' writing skills, are in their early stages but are already raising pupils' enthusiasm and enjoyment in their learning.

Pupils' personal development and well-being and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Nearly all pupils feel safe and cared for in school. Attendance and behaviour are good. Pupils cooperate willingly with each other and with their teachers. They understand that it is important to adopt a healthy lifestyle. The care, guidance and support given to pupils are good but insufficient guidance is given to enable younger pupils to understand how they can improve their work.

What the school should do to improve further

- establish a common format for recording what each pupil can do in literacy and numeracy to enable teachers to plan more precisely what they need to teach next to raise each pupil's standards

- raise expectations, especially for the more able pupils, particularly in English, mathematics and science
- develop the responsibilities of subject leaders for English, mathematics and science in particular, to enable them to monitor and evaluate their subjects more rigorously.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. On entry to the Reception classes, children's standards are in line with those expected. They settle quickly into the routines and make satisfactory progress during their first year in school. Most reach the goals set for children of this age by the time they enter Year 1 but there are weaknesses in writing. By the end of Year 2, standards are broadly average in reading but weaknesses in writing still persist as the proportion of pupils exceeding the expected level is well below the national average, and in mathematics it is below average.

By the end of Year 6, pupils' achievement, confirmed in the national tests in 2006, is satisfactory. However, the proportion exceeding the expected level is below the national average resulting in the school's overall standards being broadly average in English, mathematics and science.

The pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress. Those with English as an additional language make good progress in the early stage of learning English.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Nearly all pupils enjoy school and older pupils are really enthusiastic about it. Many say they would recommend it to others.

Pupils participate well in a good range of extra-curricular activities, visits and residential stays. Many spoke enthusiastically about their recent visit to the Black Country Museum. Pupils show a strong moral awareness in their support for charities and concern about environmental issues. Their good awareness of cultural differences of people in other countries is enhanced by strong links with a school in Sierra Leone and through topics such as 'Native American art'. Pupils develop satisfactory basic skills to prepare them for their next school and the world of work.

Communications with parents are good and parents are supportive of the school. Nearly all believe that pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good, and inspection findings support this view. Pupils say that occasional disruptive behaviour from a very small number of pupils is dealt with promptly. Pupils are polite and helpful and respond well to visitors. The school council takes its responsibilities very seriously and pupils have a growing voice in the school. Attendance has improved but some pupils are too often late.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

With teaching being satisfactory, and sometimes good, the pupils make satisfactory progress in their work. Most pupils are articulate and respond well to questions from the teacher. Generally, pupils are fairly passive when the teacher is talking to the whole class and become more animated when working on their activities. Teachers make good use of the interactive whiteboards to enliven their lessons and this sustains pupils' interest effectively. Teachers are aware that some pupils learn better in other ways and plan their lessons well for most pupils. However, the work provided for more able pupils is not always challenging enough. Good support from well-trained teaching assistants ensures that pupils with learning difficulties also make satisfactory progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum ensures that most pupils make satisfactory progress but it is not always well matched to the needs of more able pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and those with English as an additional language access all aspects of the curriculum. Provision for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory and improving. Opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in other subjects are identified but as yet this is not fully developed in lessons. Children enjoy the wide range of sporting activities on offer and lessons are enlivened by a wide variety of visits, visitors and special events. Charity fundraising, the link with local shops and events such as the interschool chess congress enable pupils to make a satisfactory contribution to the community. Recent visits by an 'artist in residence' were greatly enjoyed by the pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils benefit from learning in a safe, spacious and attractive environment. They are confident about moving up to their secondary schools. Health and safety procedures and child protection are in place and the monitoring of behaviour and attendance is good. Pupils are well supervised around the school and new procedures at the end of the school day ensure the safety of pupils effectively as they leave school.

Links with outside agencies to support pupils with learning difficulties or English as an additional language are used well and procedures for managing visits and residential stays are good. Pupils say that teachers help them to learn effectively by encouraging and rewarding their efforts. Older pupils have written targets and understand how to improve their work but this is less effective for younger pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher, supported effectively by the deputy headteacher, has a clear vision for the future needs of the school and has demonstrated a strong commitment to improve the quality of education. The issues from the last inspection have been dealt with successfully. However, improvements to teaching and learning since the last inspection have been slowed down because of the disruptions to staffing. There are good signs that these problems are now resolved and that the school is moving forward with determination. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good, providing a sure start for children. The school is aware that the role of subject leaders of English, mathematics and science in particular is still underdeveloped and is working closely with staff to develop a clearer understanding of these responsibilities to ensure more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the school's work in their subjects. The governing body is knowledgeable about the school and carries out its duties well. Governors are frequently in school and give sensitive and purposeful support and guidance to the headteacher and staff. Fresh routines established by senior members of staff and governors to monitor and evaluate the work of the school are now in place, resulting in an accurate assessment of the strengths and weaknesses. Likewise, good procedures to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching are helping to raise teachers' awareness of the need to improve standards and to lift expectations, especially for the more able pupils. Reliable systems to track each pupil's progress from year to year are being steadily compiled. Currently, assessment records for English, mathematics and science are inconsistent. There has been a significant change in the number on roll since September and a sharp increase of pupils with English as an additional language. This is being managed effectively and pupils make good progress in the acquisition of English language.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you and looking at your work. We particularly liked the way you all get on together. We found your school to be a happy place where you enjoyed your lessons.

- your headteacher has a clear understanding of how your school needs to improve and is ensuring that your school gets better
- you progress satisfactorily and your standards in reading, writing and mathematics are as good as most pupils in other schools
- the teachers teach you satisfactorily. They use the whiteboards well to explain new ideas and to make your lessons interesting
- your teachers and other adults care well for you and, as a result, your behaviour is good and you have a good understanding of the need to keep healthy and to remain safe
- many of you say that you get on well together in the classrooms and the playground and we agree with you.

There are still some ways in which your school could be better. We have asked your headteacher, staff and governors to:

- make sure that all the teachers use the same way to record what you can do in reading, writing and mathematics so that they can plan more carefully what each one of you needs to learn next
- ensure that the standards in your work in reading, writing and mathematics get better and that you do as well as you can, especially those of you who find work easy
- help the teachers in the school who take charge of the developments in English, mathematics and science to check up more thoroughly that these subjects are improving enough.