



St George's Roman Catholic Primary School, York

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121647
Local Authority York
Inspection number 292189
Inspection dates 22–23 November 2006
Reporting inspector Linda Murphy

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

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|---|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Type of school | Primary | School address | 1 Winterscale Street |
| School category | Voluntary aided | | Fishergate, York |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 | | North Yorkshire YO10 4BT |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01904 636427 |
| Number on roll (school) | 186 | Fax number | 01904 636427 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Mrs Patricia Holder |
| | | Headteacher | Mrs Helen Glendinning |
| Date of previous school inspection | 9 December 2002 | | |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves a wide and diverse area and includes children from forces families on limited postings, a growing number of travellers and a small number of asylum seekers and looked-after children. There is a high number of pupils joining and leaving the school throughout the year. Although the majority of pupils are White British, there are many other heritages represented and a small number are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those eligible for free school meals are below average. The school holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Gold Artsmark status and the FA Charter Standard.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with good features. Pupils are happy, enjoy school and behave well. Those who join throughout each year group are welcomed and quickly make friends because pupils get on well and are very caring. Relationships are strong. Pupils are respectful, confident to take initiative and keen to take on responsibilities. All this helps them in their learning and prepares them well for their future. The school provides a good level of care for its pupils and is successful in promoting their personal development through a lively extended community.

The strengths of the school have been maintained since the last inspection, despite the difficulties it has experienced through inadequate administrative support, staff absence and the lack of a deputy headteacher for two and a half years. However, these difficulties have had an adverse effect on pupils' academic achievement. As a result, since the last inspection, standards have fallen from above average to an average level. With the appointment of new staff and new arrangements for managing the school, standards are improving following this significant dip. Although standards are not yet as high as they were, pupils' achievement is satisfactory and improving.

Inadequate checks on the progress pupils make and the quality of their learning has been a contributory factor to the underachievement evident until recently. Steps are now being taken to address this. Basic systems to track pupils' progress are established but not yet used well enough.

The satisfactory curriculum is enlivened through interesting activities including the performing arts, which the school promotes well. A good range of well attended extra-curricular opportunities brings added enjoyment for pupils. Arrangements in the Foundation Stage enable the children to make satisfactory progress.

The need to deal with administrative duties and to keep the school organised from day to day without a full complement of staff caused a large workload for the headteacher. This diverted the leadership's focus away from raising standards. Until recently, too little time was devoted to checking how well pupils were learning and how quickly they were making progress. There is still some way to go but the appointment of the new deputy headteacher has strengthened the leadership team, placing the school in a better position to improve further. The school knows its strengths and areas to develop. The leadership team is taking action to accelerate pupils' achievement and priorities are now clearly focused on raising standards. The school is improving and has a satisfactory capacity for further development. Regular strategic meetings provide good opportunities for governors to look at aspects of the school's work in depth and to appropriately support and challenge the school. Value for money is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that checks on the quality of teaching and learning are robust so that pupils' attainment rises to above average.

- Build on the systems for checking pupils' progress and use the information gained to enable all pupils to achieve well.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

On entry to the Foundation Stage children's attainment is average. They make satisfactory progress and attain the standards expected nationally for their age by the end of the Reception year. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 1 to 6 with pockets of good achievement emerging as the school's more detailed systems to check pupils' progress begin to take effect. Standards are rising steadily overall and the school is in line to reach challenging targets in most year groups in 2007. It fell short of its targets in 2005 and 2006 because the progress towards them was not monitored well enough. Together with some significant staff absence and a high proportion of pupils joining and leaving the school, this adversely affected pupils' progress. Pupils who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language make at least the same progress as other pupils as a result of the effective support they receive. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve satisfactorily.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The rate of attendance for all groups of pupils, including travellers, is above the national average. Pupils are punctual, enjoy school and describe lessons as 'fun'. Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Pupils' mature attitudes enhance their learning. For instance, they particularly enjoy and benefit from working collaboratively. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good and at the heart of the school. This generates a unity of purpose and provides pupils with a good understanding of how they can contribute to the wider community. For example, pupils successfully enter local festivals and raise funds for charities. Older pupils organise and run a weekly shop. They responsibly order stock, set prices and keep a record of sales. This helps them to apply their literacy and numeracy skills and to gain an early understanding of commerce.

Very effective assemblies, celebrations and visitors to school provide pupils with time to reflect on their lives and to build a good understanding of cultures and faiths that differ from their own. Pupils are well aware of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle: school councillors have this high on their agenda. Links with a local special school enable pupils to design physical activities to be shared by all pupils to enhance their fitness. Pupils know how to keep safe because personal safety is taught well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching seen in lessons was mostly good. However, previously insufficient use of information about pupils' progress has held back learning but this is being tackled successfully. For example, most pupils are clear about how to improve because teachers mark their work well. Homework supports learning, especially through the use of the school's website where Year 6 pupils can post their work and have their questions answered. Relationships are good and classroom management appears effortless so that pupils can concentrate, enjoy learning and contribute to lessons with confidence. The school helps pupils to use their initiative and contribute to the assessment of their work and that of others. Pupils gain a better understanding of how to improve as a result. In many lessons, teachers set work that matches pupils' needs well. In some, the work does not fully meet pupils' needs and the pace of learning slows when teachers take too long explaining tasks. Teaching assistants give pupils plenty of extra help. This not only accelerates the progress of different groups of pupils but encourages a 'feel good factor' encouraging them to try even harder to learn quickly.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The award of the Basic Skills Quality Mark confirms that there is at least satisfactory provision for teaching basic skills. A wide variety of visitors and good community links, such as with the theatre and a medical school, provide good enrichment. The school is currently adapting the curriculum to make pupils more aware of the links between subjects. A wide range of extra-curricular activities includes drama, music, and a range of sporting opportunities; these are popular with pupils. In the Foundation Stage, the curriculum is based on a sound understanding of the needs of these very young people. It focuses appropriately on children's personal development and on encouraging speaking and listening so that children can take a full part in the varied activities on offer.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the way in which the school involves all pupils equally, values individual contributions and develops children's self-esteem and confidence. Governors and staff ensure that there are robust systems to keep pupils safe and healthy and to ensure their emotional well-being. Pupils say that incidents of bullying are rare and are usually dealt with quickly. They know who to turn to if they have a problem. Pupils are given guidance on how to improve their work. As a result, they know their targets and understand what they need to do next to make progress. Effective additional help is provided for some groups of pupils by the well

trained support staff and external agencies. The tracking of pupils' progress is not yet developed enough to enable managers to use the information fully to improve pupils' achievement. Teachers' assessments in the Foundation Stage have not been accurately enough checked by senior managers. This has led to some children's attainment being overestimated.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

A strong feature is that the school is led in a style that engages staff, ensures good contacts with outside agencies and promotes pupils' sense of community. Key leaders, including the headteacher and deputy headteacher, carry out their duties well in relation to pupils' personal development and well-being and in ensuring equality of opportunity. However, other aspects of management are not carried out systematically enough. This includes checking the quality of lessons and pupils' work. Neither is assessment information used sufficiently well to ensure that pupils' progress is consistently good.

Improvements made to provision have not had time to impact fully on pupils' achievement. However, leaders and managers are determined to raise standards and improve achievement further. For instance, challenging targets are set not only for pupils to achieve expected standards for their age but also for them to attain higher standards. The school's low results in the 2005 Year 6 national tests were a wake up call and since then urgent action has been taken to secure improvements. The governing body draws upon the expertise of its members to provide a balance of support and challenge to the school. It recently and understandably appointed a deputy headteacher to enhance the quality of leadership and management and to reduce the headteacher's onerous workload.

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Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| 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? | 2 |
| The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage | 3 |
| 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

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| 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

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|---|---|
| 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

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|---|---|
| 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

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| 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 | 2 |
| 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 telling us about your school and showing us your work. We have found that the school is good at some things and has other areas that need improving so we judge the school to be satisfactory overall.

The good things are that the school helps you to grow up and take on responsibilities. You enjoy school, attend regularly and behave very sensibly. You are most responsible and trustworthy. The school looks after you well and this pleases your parents. St George's also gives you lots of opportunities to enjoy clubs and activities after school.

To improve, we have asked your school leaders to keep a better track of how well you are doing and to regularly check that teaching and your learning is as good as it can be. You can help by always trying your best.