



St Gregory's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122038
Local Authority Northamptonshire
Inspection number 292300
Inspection dates 29–30 January 2007
Reporting inspector Mike Capper

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 | Grange Road |
| School category | Voluntary aided | | Northampton |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 | | NN3 2BD |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01604 403511 |
| Number on roll (school) | 375 | Fax number | 01604 403606 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Joe Metcalf |
| | | Headteacher | Eamonn Mcmorrow |
| Date of previous school inspection | 13 March 2002 | | |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school moved into a new building in September 2005, following the amalgamation of a lower and middle school. This is its first inspection as a primary school. The headteacher has been in post for just over a year. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the number identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds has increased in the last three years and is now slightly above average. Many of these children have come from Eastern European countries and some are in the early stages of learning English. Children's attainment is broadly average when they start school in the Reception.

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: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' progress in Years 3 to 6, especially in mathematics.

Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. The most recent national test results for the end of Year 6 show that pupils did not do well enough from their starting points at the end of Year 2. There are signs of improvement, and progress in English is slightly better this year, but pupils in Years 3 to 6 continue to underachieve in mathematics.

Teaching is satisfactory overall, with the best teaching being in the Foundation Stage (Reception Year) and Years 1 and 2. Provision for children in the Reception classes is good and by the end of the year, standards are slightly above those found nationally. Good teaching helps children to do well. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2, and standards are above average in Year 2. Progress dips in Years 3 to 6, especially in mathematics. As a result, the good standards in Year 2 are not maintained and in Year 6, they are broadly average overall. In Years 3 to 6, pupils are now making slightly better progress in English and science than in mathematics. They do not make enough progress in mathematics because teaching does not always meet differing needs. Academic support is satisfactory, although there are occasions throughout the school when assessment information is not used well enough by teachers to ensure that work builds securely on pupils' prior learning.

Members of staff take good care of the pupils. As a result, pupils' personal development is good. Pupils are happy, behave well and become responsible members of the community. Close links with the local parishes help to ensure that pupils' spiritual development is especially strong. The curriculum is satisfactory although not enough time is allowed for the teaching of basic skills in some classes. This slows the pace of progress, especially in mathematics. Creativity is well supported. Pupils say that they especially like taking part in the school's plays and musical performances. Newly-arrived pupils who join during the school year are helped to settle quickly.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Senior managers and governors are fully aware of what needs doing to deal with the legacy of underachievement, although this is not reflected well enough in written documentation. Since his appointment, the headteacher has worked hard and successfully in overcoming some of the barriers to raising achievement that he found when he first took up post. With the support of the local authority, good strategies have been implemented to improve teaching and learning and these are beginning to have a positive effect. Senior managers and governors know that they now need to monitor recent initiatives with more regularity and with greater rigour so that they can be sure that developments are having the desired effect and are being sustained. Parents value the school and the headteacher has ensured that their opinions are clearly heard and responded to. One parent summed

up the views of many: "The school really seeks our ideas and puts them into practice. I am very happy that my children are at St. Gregory's."

What the school should do to improve further

- improve progress in mathematics in Years 3 to 6 by allowing enough time for teaching the subject and ensuring that teachers consistently meet the differing needs of all pupils
- monitor provision more rigorously and more frequently to check that it is improving quickly enough
- ensure that teachers make better use of assessment information to plan work that always builds on what pupils already know.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, get a good start in the Reception classes and Years 1 and 2, but they do not do well enough in Years 3 to 6, especially in mathematics. In the Reception classes, children make good progress and by the start of Year 1, standards are slightly above average overall. Children in the Reception classes develop good independence and become confident speakers.

Good teaching means that pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2, and standards are above average in Year 2. The rate of progress slows in Years 3 to 6 and as a result, these good standards are not maintained. In 2006, national test results at the end of Year 6 were above average in English and slightly below average in mathematics and science. Test results show that this group of pupils had not made enough progress from the end of Year 2. Pupils are making slightly better progress in English and science this year, but progress continues to be too slow in mathematics because work is not always matched well enough to meet pupils needs. In Years 1 to 6, pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make the same progress as others in most lessons. They make good progress when they work on specific programmes outside lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is supported effectively by the distinctive Christian character of the school. Consequently, pupils learn to become thoughtful and caring. In the Reception classes, children settle quickly. They are inquisitive and make choices sensibly when working on their own. Throughout the school, pupils behave well, even when playing on the very cramped playground. They enjoy school and attend regularly. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a good understanding of the cultural diversity of society. They happily take part in acts of worship. Older pupils respect each other's differing views and beliefs and show

sensitivity towards younger ones, for example when helping them in the playground. Pupils take responsibility well and make a good contribution to the community by raising money for charities and taking part in local events. Pupils know how to stay safe and are developing a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. As one said, 'If we eat healthy food, we will do better with our work!' Because pupils basic skills are satisfactory they are reasonably well prepared for the next stage of education. They are taught about the importance of saving money and develop sound basic skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching has improved over the last year, although there are still weaknesses especially in the teaching of mathematics. Throughout the school, teachers get on well with pupils and manage behaviour effectively. Good support from teaching assistants enables pupils who have English as an additional language or those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to take a full part in lessons.

The quality of teaching is often good in the Reception classes and Years 1 and 2. Teachers are skilled at asking questions which develop the children's curiosity, extend their thinking and expand their use of language. For example in a Year 2 geography lesson about rainforests, where pupils were expected to explain their ideas clearly. In Years 3 to 6, teachers plan interesting work in English and this motivates pupils to work hard. However, teachers do not always ensure that work is matched closely enough to the individual needs of pupils, especially in mathematics. On occasions, teaching is inadequate because pupils are not given enough support or work is not matched to their individual needs.

Procedures for checking pupils' progress are becoming increasingly thorough, although not enough use is being made of this information to check that work is being pitched at the right level. A good feature of marking is the way that teachers write helpful comments in pupils' books to tell them what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

There is a good curriculum for children in the Reception classes. Adults plan a wide range of interesting activities that support learning well. In Years 1 to 6, the curriculum is satisfactory but in some classes insufficient time is allowed for teaching literacy and numeracy. This significantly slows the pace at which skills can improve, particularly in mathematics. For all pupils, the curriculum is enriched by a good variety of activities. Creativity is fostered very imaginatively through art, music and drama. After-school clubs for older pupils are popular and successful. They include basketball, art, recorders, craft, karate, recorders and rugby clubs. There are a good number of visits and visitors, including a residential trip for older pupils. These activities are greatly enjoyed and

have a good effect on pupils' development by giving them opportunities to try out new things.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Good quality pastoral support helps to make this a happy school. Pupils say that they know whom to turn to if they have problems. The school works well with parents and outside agencies to safeguard children. Teachers identify pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities quickly and set clear targets for their improvement. Academic support has improved under the leadership of the new headteacher and is now satisfactory. There are many new and helpful procedures for tracking pupils' progress. These give a clearer picture of overall attainment than in the past although information is not yet used consistently enough to ensure that the different needs of pupils are being met.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Senior managers are passionate about improving the school and are beginning to move it in the right direction. There are satisfactory systems for checking how well the school is doing. This means that the headteacher and deputy headteacher understand what needs to be improved. They have already begun to take decisive action to improve areas of weakness. There have been many useful recent initiatives. These include developing the role of subject leaders, seeking additional support from the local authority to improve the teaching of numeracy and introducing extensive systems for measuring pupils' progress from year to year. These are beginning to have a positive effect. The rise in test results last year and recent improvements in teaching demonstrate that the school has a satisfactory capacity for improvement. The school has rightly identified that it needs to monitor these recent initiatives more frequently and rigorously to check whether improvements are secure and are being maintained. At the moment, too much monitoring is informal and unrecorded.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors are supportive and are kept well informed by the headteacher. They have rightly identified that they now need to do more to hold the school to account.

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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 |
|---|-----------------------|

Overall effectiveness

| | |
|--|----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 4 |
| 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 | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | No |

Achievement and standards

| | |
|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 4 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 4 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 4 |

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

| | |
|---|---|
| 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? | 3 |

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 | 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? | Yes |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for showing us your work. You were very polite and friendly. We found lots of good things in your school, but we have asked that your school should be placed in a special category so that it gets extra help. This is because some of you are not doing as well as you should, especially in mathematics in Years 3 to 6.

Some of the things we found out about your school:

- good teaching means that you make good progress in the Reception classes and Years 1 and 2 but progress is slower in Years 3 to 6
- you behave well and are keen to take responsibility. We are pleased that you make a good contribution to the local community and learn how to stay safe and healthy
- there are lots of interesting things to do out of lessons. You produce some super artwork and your school performances sound great fun!
- all adults in school are very kind and caring and they look after you well
- your headteacher and governors know that they need to do more to make the school even better

What we have asked your school to do now:

- timetable more literacy and numeracy lessons in Years 3 to 6 and make sure that teachers always give you work that meets your needs in mathematics
- make better use of the information about how well you are doing to give you work that is not too easy or too hard for you
- check more carefully that you are all doing well enough and that all the new things the headteacher has done are really making a difference to how well you learn.

We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you about your work and watching you learn and we wish you all well for the future. We hope you continue to help your teachers by working hard and trying your best.