

St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124373
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	292977
Inspection dates	11–12 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Brian Holmes

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	355
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Katherine Hetherington
Headteacher	Julie Collins
Date of previous school inspection	30 September 2002
School address	Wilnecote Lane Belgrave Tamworth B77 2LF
Telephone number	01827 475045
Fax number	01827 475048

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Gabriel's is a larger than average primary school. Pupils travel from all over the town because of the school's distinctive Catholic ethos. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with outstanding features. It provides good value for money and, under the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, supported well by the deputy headteacher and the leadership team, has a good capacity to improve further. As one parent commented, 'St Gabriel's is our little secret! A truly lovely school for our children.'

Throughout the school, pupils achieve well and make good progress. From broadly average attainment on entry to Reception, nearly all children reach the goals expected by the end of the Reception Year and a significant minority exceed them. Standards are above average at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading and mathematics. In writing, boys do not attain as well as girls. In Key Stage 2, pupils' standards are above average in English, mathematics and science, although in writing, girls still perform better than boys. Initiatives to interest boys in writing through careful choice of texts and writing topics are too recent to have had a full effect.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Their attitudes to and enjoyment of school are excellent. Pupils are confident and mature learners who demonstrate high levels of care and consideration for others and are inspired by their teachers. Pupils say that 'teachers give you lots of support and encouragement'. As a result of the outstanding care, support and guidance they receive, pupils demonstrate outstanding spiritual, moral and social awareness. They feel valued by the school and make a positive contribution to its life in different ways. For example, older pupils act as 'playground buddies' for younger pupils. They have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and live healthily and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils achieve well because leadership and management, teaching and learning and the curriculum are all good. The leadership team have an extremely clear vision for the school and have focused both staff and pupils on raising achievement. Teachers enable pupils to approach their learning with high levels of confidence and the extent to which pupils are able to evaluate their own work is exemplary, even amongst the youngest children. The school provides a wide range of activities and clubs that enriches pupils' experiences and adds value to their education. The headteacher, governors and staff at all levels, have all worked well to support learning and improve the achievement of all pupils. There is good use of assessment to check and keep track of pupils' progress and then to improve learning. The academic guidance pupils receive is outstanding and results in them having an excellent understanding of their targets and what they have to do to achieve them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the standards of boys' attainment in writing to be more in line with those of girls, by consistently stimulating their interest through different texts and topics of interest.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. They attain good standards that are above average across the school. Children's attainment on entry is broadly in line with national averages, but a minority of children, mainly boys, enter the Reception class with skills that are below the level expected. Most children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and nearly all reach the goals expected, with a significant minority exceeding them. In Key Stage 1, good progress continues

and pupils attain standards that are above average in reading and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Standards in writing are in line with the average at the end of the year because the standards boys attain are not as high as those reached by the girls.

In Key Stage 2, pupils continue to make good progress and achieve well in all year groups. At the end of Year 6, pupils achieve above average standards in English, mathematics and science. More able pupils do particularly well in English and science. However, boys do not attain as well as girls in writing. Learners with difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and achieve well across the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are proud of their school, speaking enthusiastically about 'a friendly school where you can have fun'. They demonstrate its values by respecting and caring for others and through their contribution to the school community. The school council makes good suggestions about how to improve their school and organised a successful anti-bullying week to increase awareness as well as raising funds for charity. Relationships within the school are excellent and contribute to pupils' progress in lessons through work with others in pairs and groups. Older pupils feel the school has made them 'more responsible and mature'. Thanks to good work by the school, attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now average. It is still adversely affected by parents taking their children on holidays during term-time.

Pupils have an excellent knowledge of how to keep healthy, for example, by eating fruit, drinking water and taking part in a wide range of sporting activities. They have a well developed understanding of how to keep themselves safe and feel confident about approaching staff if they have any concerns. They report that bullying is rare and is 'straight away dealt with'. Pupils' outstanding personal skills and good achievement in literacy and numeracy prepare them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good in the Foundation Stage because well-organised activities in a stimulating setting encourage the children to develop their self-confidence to become independent learners. Pupils are keen learners because activities are interesting and relevant. Relationships between pupils and teachers are excellent and contribute to the harmonious and purposeful atmosphere in classrooms.

The good pace of learning stems from well planned lessons in which teachers give clear guidance to help pupils reach their objectives. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and they tell pupils exactly what they are learning and why. Good marking throughout the school indicates how pupils can improve their work and reach their targets. Pupils from the youngest to the oldest are encouraged to check their own work and that of others. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning and help the pupils with whom they are working to make good progress. The school itself has recognised the need to sharpen aspects of teaching to raise the standards of boys' writing further by stimulating their interest through careful selection of texts and writing topics.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum enables all pupils to achieve well. In the Foundation Stage, pupils are encouraged to develop their communication and independent learning skills well. The school makes good provision for learners with difficulties and/or disabilities so that they achieve well. There is a strong emphasis on equipping pupils with skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). The process of giving pupils opportunities to use these skills in other subjects has been effectively planned but is not fully embedded across the school. Religious education, music, art and sport are strong and increase pupils' enjoyment of learning.

There is an outstanding range of exciting extra-curricular and enrichment activities which serve to make learning stimulating and develop pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem. Pupils eagerly participate in musical, sporting, creative and leisure activities. Many of them enthuse about Irish dancing, cross-country and the French club. Good personal, social and health education and circle time give valuable opportunities for pupils to understand the importance of their emotional development and well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Outstanding provision in this area is at the heart of the school's success. Staff know the pupils well and provide excellent role models to help them feel secure and able to flourish. Pupils respond very positively to being treated with consistent fairness and respect. The care and concern shown to pupils are greatly appreciated by their parents. There are very rigorous procedures for safeguarding pupils and ensuring that all adults who come into contact with them are suitable. Child protection and health and safety systems are robust and risk assessments are comprehensive. The academic progress of all pupils is closely checked and those who experience problems in learning are quickly identified and receive outstanding support. Staff use the information gained well to identify pupils who are underachieving in order to give them a boost. All pupils are aware of their targets and know precisely what they need to do to improve their work and move on to the next stage.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are having an increasing effect on enabling pupils to achieve well and attain high standards, both in their academic achievement and in their personal development and well-being. The work of the headteacher and the leadership team in developing the school's mission and self-review process has been outstanding. This emphasis on developing the leadership skills of all staff has led to increasingly effective checking of teaching and learning and pupils' performance towards their targets.

The role of subject leaders has been reviewed to focus more on developing whole-school approaches to improving achievement, for example, in making the curriculum more creative and enjoyable. These more recent developments are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' achievement. The governing body fulfils its duties well. It checks on the work of the school through its committees and visits to school by governors. Parents have extremely positive views of the school and are very supportive of its work.

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Annex A

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?	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	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

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	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

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?	2
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	1
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

13 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School, Tamworth, Staffordshire B77 2LF

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we visited St Gabriel's. We enjoyed talking to you and listening to what you had to say about your school. We know that you are proud of your school and like all the activities it provides for you. We think that St Gabriel's is a good school with some outstanding strengths. These are the main things that we found out about your school:

- You make good progress and achieve good standards in English, mathematics and science, although the boys do not do as well as the girls in their writing.
- You behave well and have good attitudes to your learning.
- You really enjoy your time in school and you know how to keep yourselves safe and healthy.
- Your teachers do a good of teaching you and helping you to become confident learners.
- The school provides you with a lot of interesting activities and clubs.
- Your teachers take outstanding care of you to keep you safe and healthy, and to support your learning.
- The school is well led and managed by the headteacher and the other staff in school.

In order to make the education you receive at the school even better, we have asked the headteacher and the rest of the staff to:

- Help the boys to do as well as the girls in their writing by choosing books and topics that will interest them.

You can help your teachers by continuing to work hard to do your best all the time and by continuing to enjoy your time in school.

Best wishes

Brian Holmes

Lead inspector