

St Gregory's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104936
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	308709
Inspection dates	8–9 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Eileen Mulgrew HMI

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	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Anthony Kneebone
Headteacher	Mrs D Albion
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2004
School address	Sandy Lane Lydiate Liverpool Merseyside L31 2LB
Telephone number	0151 5265856
Fax number	0

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Gregory's is a slightly smaller than average primary school with the majority of pupils attending from the immediate area. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is very low. Almost all pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs is well below the national average. The number of pupils who join the school at times after Reception is slightly higher than the average. The school has received Artsmark Silver Award, Eco Bronze Award and Sportsmark awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Gregory's provides a satisfactory education for its pupils and has strengths in some areas of its work. In particular the pupils' good awareness of the spiritual dimension to their world is due to the strong emphasis the school places on developing this aspect. Many parents speak warmly of the school and comment on the friendliness and welcoming atmosphere. Typical views of parents are captured in the statement, 'It is a friendly and welcoming school and our children enjoy attending it.'

Pupils enter Year 1 with skills that are typical for their age. After making satisfactory progress they reach standards by the end of Year 2 that are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. In Key Stage 2, standards in English and science are broadly average but below average in mathematics. Pupils have made insufficient progress in mathematics mainly because of staffing disruption. However, the school has taken action to improve teaching and learning and most pupils are now making satisfactory progress. Despite this the more able still underachieve.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, although better in some lessons. In these lessons, brisk pace and high expectations enable pupils to make impressive gains in their learning and make good progress. In weaker lessons, the pace is slow and there is ineffective use of worksheets, resulting in pupils not making the gains in learning of which they are capable. Teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge. Marking of work celebrates the efforts of the pupils; it does not always give clear advice about how work can be improved. Consequently, opportunities are missed for pupils to extend their learning.

The curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils appreciate the themed days and weeks which enable them to study a subject in more depth; for example, the science and technology week in the summer term. The curriculum is enriched by the use of visits and visitors and the many out-of-class activities. Pupils' good personal development and well-being are a result of the good care the school provides. Pupils are polite, caring to each other, want to learn, and develop good attitudes to school. Behaviour is good and pupils' regular attendance supports their enjoyment of school.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Recent improvements in classroom practice and pupils' progress led the school to be over generous in the judgements of many areas of its work. The school holds a vast amount of assessment information on the progress of individual pupils. However, it does not use this information to set sufficiently challenging targets for pupils' progress.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors have a realistic picture of the strengths of the school and the improvements it needs to make. They have been instrumental in supporting the senior leaders in strengthening the teaching team. The school gives satisfactory value for money and has satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The quality of education in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) is satisfactory. Children enter the Nursery with skills that are typical for their age. Children settle quickly into the Nursery because they are well cared for by staff. As a result, children rapidly gain confidence in their new surroundings and take full advantage of direct teaching activities as well as happily following their own curiosity. Since the last inspection the school has developed the outdoor

area, but its use has not yet been fully developed. Parents appreciate the good arrangements for their children starting Nursery and transfer to Reception. Children feel safe, get to know staff and become familiar with school routines. Parents recognise how quickly their children become part of the school family. Satisfactory leadership of this stage has resulted in joint planning between the Nursery and Reception staff leading to a well-ordered atmosphere within which children make satisfactory progress. Consequently, by the end of the Reception year all children are working securely at a level typical for their age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate progress and raise standards in mathematics in Key Stage 2, especially for the higher achieving pupils.
- Increase the proportion of teaching which is good or better.
- Ensure marking of pupils' work gives clear guidance of how to improve.
- Make more effective use of assessment information to match work to pupils' learning and to set targets for school improvement.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average. Pupils join Year 1 working securely at the standards expected for their age, with some working at a higher level. Satisfactory and better teaching and good attention to personal development result in pupils making satisfactory progress over Key Stage 1.

In 2007, results in the national tests showed pupils in Year 6 reached average standards in English and science and below in mathematics. Progress between Year 2 and Year 6 was less than that in similar schools. Satisfactory progress was made in English with the average number of pupils doing better for their age. In science, just over half of all pupils gained the higher Level 5 after making satisfactory progress. Progress in mathematics was much weaker and fewer than the average number of pupils did better for their age. Inspection evidence and the school's assessment information show that standards are improving, albeit more slowly in mathematics, due to better teaching. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Good relationships with staff and other pupils are firmly based on respect for all. Pupils say they feel safe and have each chosen one member of staff they will go to if they have any troubles. Older pupils show maturity in their concern for the younger pupils and act as good role models; for example, as house captains and buddies. Even very young pupils understand and can articulate their feelings due to the effective programme which allows all pupils to explore their social and emotional needs. As a result, pupils' development in social and moral aspects is good. Pupils have a good understanding of other cultures through projects and assemblies. Through their healthy choice of food and enthusiastic involvement in sport, pupils have a good understanding of the importance of living

a healthy lifestyle. The healthy competitiveness shown by pupils in the inter-school sporting activities prepares them well for future team working. Pupils contribute to the school community and the wider community through many activities; for example, by presenting their musical talents at the Liverpool Capital of Culture festival.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers' subject knowledge is satisfactory, and is improving with the recent support from the local authority consultants for mathematics and English. Teachers are appreciative of this partnership and readily adopt the advice provided. As a result, teachers feel more confident in using the revised national guidance for planning lessons. Typical features of the more effective lessons are the brisk pace and good use of questions and prompts which allow pupils to explain their thinking and reasons for solutions. Through this involvement pupils are excited, have fun and make gains in their learning. In less effective lessons, too much time is spent in explanation by the teacher; pupils are not excited by the activities, pace slows and learning time is lost, particularly for the more able pupils. Regular marking of work includes supportive comments and an acknowledgement of the pupils' efforts. Teachers are starting to give clear details of how pupils can improve their skills in writing. However, this kind of advice is not consistent throughout the school or in other subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Writing is improving because there are now better opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy skills in other subjects. This has enabled opportunities for pupils to use literacy across the curriculum and the introduction of 'big writing' is improving pupils' writing skills. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is good and pupils are confident in using their good ICT skills for research and homework. There are fewer opportunities available for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills in other subject areas. This slows down the rate of progress they make. The curriculum is enriched by a valuable programme of visitors and visits; older pupils talk excitedly about the residential trip to Llandudno. Music is particularly well developed through the choir and instrumental tuition.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Parents are appreciative of the good pastoral care the school provides. This level of care results in pupils feeling secure and happy in school. Relevant required procedures for child protection and safeguarding pupils are in place. Strategies are in place to identify pupils who may be in need of additional support. Improved programmes to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have been introduced this year. Through its effective partnerships with a range of external agencies the school is able to access other support available. Parents are kept informed about school events through regular bulletins.

The school has recently refined its system for checking pupils' academic progress. Assessment of pupils' progress is regular and systematic. However, this information is not yet used effectively to track the progress of pupils and enable teachers to set appropriate and challenging targets. Pupils have targets in English and mathematics but these are not consistently reviewed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The experienced headteacher and deputy headteacher know the pupils, their families and the staff well. Together with the governors they provide satisfactory leadership and management overall, but with particular strengths in pastoral and spiritual leadership. Although all pupils are valued as individuals, the school has not given enough attention to raising standards. Initially, action was slow in tackling the issue of weak progress in Key Stage 2 and the drop in standards. However, working with the local authority, the school has implemented strategies this year which are starting to take effect. Governors and senior leaders took action to tackle the issue of disruption in staffing. The school has set targets for improvement in the national tests. However, the use of assessment information to make these targets sufficiently challenging is unsatisfactory. The role of subject leaders is still underdeveloped in monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision.

Governance is satisfactory with all statutory responsibilities administered effectively. Governors are very supportive of the work of the school and individual governors use their expertise effectively to improve areas of the school's work. However, governors do not yet monitor and challenge the school sufficiently.

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

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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to thank you very much for your friendliness and help during our visit to your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and hearing your views. We were impressed by your hard work and good behaviour, as well as the way you respect and take care of each other. We know you feel safe and well-cared for in school and know how much you appreciate the extra activities your school provides and your attractive classrooms. We enjoyed listening to you sing.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education and these are the things we found best about it:

- most of your parents are happy for you to go to St Gregory's
- most of you work as hard as you can
- you develop well personally and socially
- some of your lessons are really interesting to help you make lots of progress.

We have asked your headteacher and teachers to:

- help you to make quicker progress in mathematics in Key Stage 2
- to share ideas so all your lessons are good or better
- make sure marking gives you clear advice on how to improve your work.

We have also asked you headteacher and governors to use all the information they have on your progress to give you targets for your work which will challenge you to do even better.

We know you will play your part in making St Gregory's an even better school and we wish you all the best for your future.