

# St Gregory's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112339
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	310858
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 July 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sheila Mawer

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	214
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Hughie Stamper
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Celia Holder
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 June 2005
<b>School address</b>	Furness Road Westfield Workington Cumbria CA14 3PD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01900 325248
<b>Fax number</b>	01900 325249

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This average sized school is situated in an area of significant social and economic deprivation. Levels of deprivation have increased since the previous inspection. The percentage entitled to free school meals is very high. Over the past five years, the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has risen from 19% to 41%, which is exceptionally high. Nearly all pupils are White British. The school holds the Healthy Schools' award and Activemark. There have been significant staff changes in the past two years, including the appointment of two acting headteachers. A new headteacher started in January 2008. The school will be part of an Improving Schools Programme from September 2008.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This satisfactory school is improving rapidly under the outstanding leadership and management of the new headteacher. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about how the school is moving forward. They say, 'Our new headteacher is brilliant in responding to the challenges faced by the school.' The school has been through turbulent times over the past two years, leading to a decline in standards, especially in the infant classes. The new headteacher quickly gained an accurate assessment of the weaknesses affecting standards and progress and acted promptly to halt the decline. Achievement is now satisfactory overall. Pupils start in Year 1 with standards that are lower than expected for their age. Despite making satisfactory progress in mathematics and reading, standards remain well below average. Pupils do not make enough progress in writing and standards are significantly below average. This is because skills are insufficiently developed in different subjects, including English. It is in Key Stage 2 where the impact of change is more apparent. Standards have improved and by the end of Year 6 are broadly average. They are above average in English and broadly average in mathematics and science. Overall progress in Key Stage 2 is satisfactory and it is good in English.

All staff ensure that pastoral support and care are strong. This contributes significantly to pupils' good personal skills. Pupils enjoy school. Attendance and punctuality have improved. Behaviour is good and all have a keen awareness of how to keep fit, healthy and safe. By the time they leave school, pupils are adequately prepared for their future education. The school recognises the importance of good assessment to detect underachievement and improvements are continuing at a good pace. Learning targets are set in reading and writing. They are used well in most junior classes to help pupils improve. Marking is variable with examples of good practice when teachers provide clear pointers to help pupils know how well they are doing.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory, with developing strengths. There is good and outstanding teaching in some junior classes. Satisfactory teaching in the infant classes does not always have the same vigour and challenge. Although teachers usually target work correctly to match pupils' needs this is not always the case in writing and is not enabling pupils to make the best progress. The curriculum is satisfactory with strengths. Good enrichment ensures pupils' needs and interests are met. Spacious outdoor areas and good resources for keeping fit compensate for small classrooms. Pupils are proud of their involvement with the local community. Senior citizens and community police officers regularly join the school for lunch and often stay on for special events.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school is emerging very positively from a difficult period. Improvements stalled during this time. They are now rapidly gathering pace as can be seen in the improvements in Key Stage 2. Improvements since the previous inspection are satisfactory. Pivotal to the school's success is the excellent leadership of the headteacher. She has had a significant impact in moving the school forward. There is a growing effectiveness in other senior leaders, including the governors. Their monitoring roles are developing with some evidence of impact on teaching and learning. However, their role in ensuring that changes are applied consistently across the school has yet to be tested. The capacity for further improvement is satisfactory, with the school giving satisfactory value for money.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage is well led and managed and provision is good. Induction procedures are thorough. Children start school happily, flourish in the friendly and safe environment and parents have confidence in the school. They enter the Nursery with very low skills, especially in speech and language. Staff focus on this aspect of children's language development and teaching is good. Children make good progress throughout the Foundation Stage, but few reach the goals expected of five year olds. The well planned curriculum promotes children's learning in an exciting way and is matched closely to their individual needs. Consistent routines and a good balance of different activities help them to develop independence, share equipment sensibly and behave well. They particularly enjoy the carpet sessions using the interactive white board and singing rhymes together. Teamwork is very effective. Adults check children's progress regularly and use the information to plan challenging activities. This ensures children build rapidly on their skills and knowledge, particularly in language and communication. This typical comment from a parent illustrates just how much they value the Foundation Stage. 'My son regards his teachers as his best friends. The staff put their heart and soul into the teaching.'

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement especially in writing in Key Stage 1.
- Ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good or better across the school.
- Extend monitoring to ensure consistency of improvements throughout the school.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils start in Year 1 with standards that are lower than expected for their age. Results of teachers' assessments in 2007 were significantly below average in writing and reading and broadly average in mathematics. This has been the picture of results over the last three years and is partly due to the changing background of pupils when they start school, but mainly through staff changes and weaker teaching. Although pupils make satisfactory progress in reading and mathematics their standards remain well below average. Pupils do not make enough progress in writing and standards are significantly below average. Early indications of teachers' assessments for 2008 point to an improvement in reading with lower standards in mathematics.

Standards at the end of Year 6 are above average in English and broadly average in mathematics and science. Results in the national tests in 2007 were below average in English and mathematics and broadly average in science. Rigorous improvement strategies started in January 2008 are impacting positively on standards. Unvalidated results for 2008 indicate a strong improvement from the previous two years. Numbers reaching the higher levels in English have improved significantly, with close to half the pupils exceeding the level expected for their age. These pupils have made good progress in English and satisfactory progress in mathematics and science from their average starting point at the end of Year 2. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress and are well supported to play a full part in lessons.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Through the school's very caring and spiritual ethos, pupils thrive personally and develop into mature, articulate and sensible individuals who are well prepared for the future. Spiritual, moral and social developments are very good. Cultural awareness is satisfactory and improving. Links with a school in Zambia are being strengthened to enable pupils to learn more about life in another country. Pupils have a keen sense of right and wrong and say that bullying is very rare. They are confident that if it were to occur, 'it would soon be sorted out'. Their attendance is broadly in line with national expectations.

Pupils have good opportunities to undertake responsibilities such as playground buddies. The school council works well to suggest improvements, for example new crockery for the dining hall and playground equipment have recently been purchased. Pupils understand what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle. They enjoy strong links with the local community through their involvement in the 'Cumbria in Bloom' project and raising money for charities. They feel very safe in the school.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The school has clear measures in place to improve teaching. Lessons observed from Year 4 upwards were good or outstanding and this is accelerating learning in these years. Throughout the school teaching is well organised with good relationships between adults and pupils. This promotes positive behaviour and productive learning, especially for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teachers' planning and lesson preparations are satisfactory. In the most successful lessons, interactive white boards are used imaginatively to explore ideas and provide explanations. This keeps pupils involved and helps them think about their learning. Assessment information is used well to plan challenging work, with high expectations made clear to pupils. An outstanding numeracy lesson in Year 4 had all these qualities and more. With great skill the teacher guided the pupils exceptionally well to investigate with consecutive numbers on a grid. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed the challenge and made excellent progress. When teaching is satisfactory these strengths in challenge and pace are less evident. This is often the case in the infant classes and leads to some pupils losing interest. In writing especially, assessment information is not used enough to match work closely to pupils' needs and leads to inadequate writing skills. Also, the development of skills to write purposefully is inconsistent and the range of writing is very limited. Few pupils are confident writers when they leave Year 2.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

Pupils benefit from an increasingly well organised and interesting curriculum. Staff have worked hard in recent months to make it more relevant to pupil's needs and interests. The school is reviewing its provision for learning difficulties and/or disabilities to ensure support is targeted to those with the greatest needs. The use of information and communication technology, (ICT) across the curriculum is good.

There are not enough occasions for pupils in the infant classes to practise their writing skills in English and other subjects. The effective provision in personal, social and health education makes a good contribution to pupils' well-being.

Extensive opportunities are given to pupils to engage in extra-curricular clubs. These are a strong feature of the curriculum. Visitors, such as Carlisle Football Club, and visits to places of interest including a residential visit, support the curriculum well.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The pastoral care and support for children is good. The school provides a safe and healthy place to learn. Parents appreciate how well their children are cared for and value the support they receive from staff. Procedures for safeguarding children including child protection are well established and thorough risk assessments meet national guidelines. Academic guidance is satisfactory. The school has recently introduced a more rigorous system of assessment to track pupils' progress across the school. This is helping staff to identify and provide help more quickly for those pupils who are not making expected rates of progress. Staff use assessment information well to set pupils' targets in reading and writing. This practice is helping the older pupils to know how to improve but as yet is not working as well in the infants.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new and highly effective headteacher is successfully moving the school forward. New initiatives are already impacting positively on progress, teaching, and attendance. A significant investment in training and additional resources has raised standards in reading throughout the school. Test results in English are the strongest they have been for five years and exceeded the challenging targets set. The school's accurate understanding of its effectiveness through self-evaluation clearly recognises there is more to do, especially in raising standards in writing in the infant classes.

A strongly focused leadership team is established. Staff and governors are familiar with the strengths and weaknesses in the school. It has alerted them all to their responsibilities in helping to raise standards. The leadership team has started to monitor more rigorously and this is improving teaching and learning. Coordinators are receiving training to develop further this aspect of their roles. Governance is satisfactory. Governors' recent training is helping them support the school more effectively. They are ready to be involved in monitoring and evaluating school improvements.

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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?	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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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

11 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Gregory's Catholic Primary School, Cumbria, CA14 3PD

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we visited your school. The discussions we had with you and especially the school council helped us to learn a lot about the school and your responsibilities. You receive a satisfactory education and the school knows what it has to do to make things better for you. There are many good things about the school. You enjoy coming to school and your attendance and punctuality are getting much better. Well done and keep it up! You behave well and work hard in lessons. You show a lot of respect for each other and feel safe in school because of the good care and support you receive from adults. It was lovely to sit with you all at lunch and see how much you enjoyed talking to the senior citizens and community police. They have become valued friends of the school.

Your new headteacher is doing a brilliant job alongside the staff and governors who are all working hard to improve the school further. You told us about the many improvements that have happened already in the school, such as healthier meals and a lovely plant filled courtyard for you to enjoy. I hope you do well in the 'Cumbria in Bloom' competition. Your school is working hard to improve the learning for you all. Already those in Year 6 are making good progress in English. There is a need for the school to keep checking that you are making as much progress as possible especially in writing in the infant classes. We saw some good and excellent teaching and the school are going to make all your lessons interesting. Some of you will find the learning more challenging and there will be more support for all your different needs. This will help you to make the best progress you can. Children in the Nursery and Reception class are doing well. The Foundation Stage is a very happy place to learn and we saw lots of smiling faces and good work.

There are lots of exciting things to enjoy in the school through the satisfactory and improving curriculum. We hope your sports day wasn't rained off! You all have a big part to play in making your school even better, by working hard and always doing your best. Good luck everybody.

Yours sincerely

Sheila MawerJonathon Shields

Lead inspectorTeam inspector