

St Gregory's Catholic Primary School, Preston

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119609
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313356
Inspection date	10 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Lynne Read

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	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Cath Wallace
Headteacher	Mr Gary Hayes
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2003
School address	Blackpool Road Deepdale Preston Lancashire PR1 6HQ
Telephone number	01772 795415
Fax number	01772 798455

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- Are progress and standards maintained at a good level overall? What has the school done to improve the relatively lower standards in writing, especially at KS1?
- Is the quality of the curriculum, teaching and learning and care, guidance and support good enough to challenge and support all pupils, and ensure that all achieve their best? Are there any outstanding features?
- Are there any outstanding elements in terms of personal development?
- Do managers and leaders, including governors, check the performance of the school to ensure that each pupil has the challenge or support to do their best?

Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, lesson observations, assessment data, school documents, parents' replies to the questionnaire, and discussions with staff and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized primary school serving a culturally diverse area of Preston. Just over half of the pupils are of White British heritage, around one third have Asian backgrounds and some have Irish or Caribbean backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who are learning English as an additional language is higher than in most schools. An average number claim their entitlement to free school meals. When they enter the Reception class, children's development is below that typical for the age group. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Gregory's is an outstanding school that provides excellent value for money. It has a deservedly high reputation and places are in great demand. Parents have exceptionally positive views of the school. Through their returned questionnaires, they commend the teachers who, they say, 'provide a safe, welcoming environment' and 'are approachable'. There is also praise for 'the excellent progress children make' and 'the good organisation and communications'. Excellent links with other schools and agencies bring many benefits to pupils' learning and personal development. For example, the link with a local sports college enhances children's physical education. Resources for the younger pupils and support for families come from the Children's Centre and pupils develop a good sense of the wider community through strong links with the church.

Standards are consistently high and pupils' achievement is outstanding. The school exceeds its very challenging targets. This impressive performance has put the school in the top five per cent of the country for the last three years. On entry to Year 1, most pupils have met the expected learning targets for their age, having made rapid progress from their starting points. They make excellent progress through Key Stages 1 and 2. Improved systems for checking pupils' progress have led to teachers setting higher expectations for individuals in Key Stage 1. Consequently, the Year 2 teacher assessments for 2007 were higher than usually seen. During Key Stage 2 progress accelerates further and a high proportion of pupils exceed the national level expected by the end of Year 6. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are learning English as an additional language make excellent progress from their starting points and the majority attain the nationally expected level by Year 6.

Pupils' learning is outstanding because they are extremely well taught and the care, guidance and support provided are excellent. Individual progress is assessed each term. The information is then exceptionally well used to ensure that lessons provide targeted support for those who need extra help and exacting challenges for the more able. Where pupils' progress is not meeting the teachers' very high expectations, special catch-up or booster programmes are introduced and this is an important factor underpinning the excellent progress at the school. Well trained teaching assistants make a significant contribution to learning. Through careful guiding and encouragement, they enable pupils to succeed. Teachers provide very helpful learning targets for pupils, showing them how well they are doing and what needs improving. The quality of marking is exceptional and provides additional, specific guidance for individuals; this helps to boost progress. For example, the Year 6 writing books show how pupils have acted on the advice given and improved their work, week on week. From an early stage, pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own progress and make suggestions for improvement. As a result, they are developing excellent skills of independent learning. Parents are actively encouraged to be involved in their children's learning and support the homework programme very well.

The outstanding curriculum is another important factor in the school's success. Adaptations to the Year 1 curriculum ensure that all pupils have a secure foundation of practical and oral work before moving onto their National Curriculum studies. In Key Stage 1, lessons provide a very good balance in developing creative, oral, physical, practical and emotional skills as well as the academic. This provides a very broad and secure platform for pupils' work in Key Stage 2. Throughout school, the curriculum provides extensive opportunities for pupils to apply what they learn in their literacy, numeracy and computer lessons. There is excellent enhancement for learning through visits or visitors, together with themed events such as the 'music day'.

Pupils take very good advantage of out-of-school clubs which provide excellent opportunities for exercise and competitive sport alongside those to develop creative talents.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding and attendance is above average. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also outstanding; it is supported very well by the school's Catholic values and an excellent programme of personal, health, social and citizenship education. In this ethnically diverse school, all faiths and cultures are recognised and celebrated, creating a harmonious community. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and behave extremely well. Older pupils demonstrate very good self-discipline and a strong work ethic. Meticulous attention is given to care and health and safety issues. Measures for safeguarding pupils are rigorous. Pupils say they feel safe and free from bullying. They like the fact that 'teachers listen to both sides' in a dispute and are 'very fair'. Pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and enjoy the 'healthy eating' options provided at breaks and lunchtimes. There is a strong community spirit with pupils collecting for charities, helping others and accepting responsibilities such as being playleaders or members of the school council. These activities prepare pupils well for their future education and work.

The headteacher provides excellent leadership for the team of very talented and hard-working staff. All are committed to providing the best for pupils. This is reflected in the bright, stimulating learning environment and good quality resources. There is no complacency in this outstanding school. Standards have risen considerably since the previous inspection and all areas for development have been addressed. In the short time since his appointment, the headteacher has introduced added rigour into the process of checking provision and performance. Excellent improvements have been made to the monitoring roles of the senior and subject managers, to the systems for tracking pupils' progress and setting expectations, and to the production of relevant action plans. These initiatives have resulted in improved standards in Key Stage 1 this year. Because managers are continually identifying areas for potential improvement and acting on them, there is excellent capacity for the school to maintain its strengths and improve even further. Governors are taking an increasingly active and critical part in managing and leading the school and have a training programme to enhance their role further. They bring a good deal of expertise to the task and have the pupils' interests firmly at heart. Governance is good and all statutory requirements are met.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children join the school with a very broad range of skills. A significant proportion are learning English as an additional language. Overall, their development on entry is below that typical for the age group. Children make an excellent start to their education in the Reception class. They are taught in small, adult-led groups to develop specific skills and areas of knowledge. Alongside this provision is an interesting selection of well planned and structured 'free choice' activities where children practise and consolidate what they have been taught. By the end of the year most have reached the nationally agreed expectations for the age group. Children who enter with low levels of development catch up extremely well and those who are in the early stages of learning English often make great strides in their speaking and listening skills.

What the school should do to improve further

There are no major key issues for action.

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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

11 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Gregory's Catholic Primary School, Preston, Lancashire.

PR1 6HQ

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school. I thoroughly enjoyed my day and I appreciated all the help you gave me and the interesting conversations we had. In return, I would like to tell you what I discovered.

St Gregory's is an excellent school. Some of the things that impressed me most were your excellent behaviour, your willingness to persevere and work hard, and the excellent progress you make. You get on very well together and take excellent care of each other. You are a credit to your families and your school; well done! Your council members ensure that your views and opinions are taken into consideration. Your requests have influenced the refurbishment of your classrooms and the purchase of playground equipment so I think you must be very persuasive. I also think you do an excellent job in raising money for charities which shows that you care about those who are less fortunate in the world.

The school is a safe and happy place. It is good to know that bullying is a thing of the past and that adults 'are always around to help'. Your comments included 'this is a sporty school', 'the teachers are superb, helpful and kind', and 'lessons are really good'. I agree with all of them. Please thank your parents for sending lots of replies to the questionnaire. They are exceptionally pleased with the school, especially the excellent teaching and the very good amount of information they receive.

You are keen to learn and take very good notice of the advice that your teachers give you. Well done, this is helping you to learn at a fast rate and to reach high standards. Your teachers are always looking for new ideas to stretch your abilities and talents. I hope you continue to relish the challenges that they bring to lessons and enjoy continued success at the school.

Thank you once again for the interesting conversations I had and for letting me share your day. There is a great deal about your school of which you and the staff should be extremely proud. Please accept my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Lynne Read

Lead inspector