

St Gregory's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122038
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314201
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Weston 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	375
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joe Metcalf
Headteacher	Eamonn Mcmorrow
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2007
School address	Grange Road Northampton NN3 2BD
Telephone number	01604 403511
Fax number	01604 403606

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

This large Catholic school serves the town of Northampton with pupils attending from a wide area. At its previous inspection in January 2007, the school was given a Notice to Improve. There are fewer pupils claiming free school meals than average. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, but an increasing number are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils for whom English is not their first language is around the national average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and with a statement of special educational need is below that found nationally. More pupils join or leave the school at times other than the usual designated starting points. The school moved into the current building in September 2005 following the amalgamation of the lower and middle school.

Key for inspection grades

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 special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement. The overall effectiveness of the school is inadequate because insufficient progress has been made in tackling issues for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Although rates of progress in mathematics have increased, because more time has been allocated, too many pupils are still not doing well enough in Years 3 to 6. As a result standards and achievement in Key Stage 2 are inadequate. Provision is monitored more frequently and rigorously by subject leaders than at the time of the previous inspection. However, the implementation of whole school initiatives such as tracking pupils is too variable. Many teachers are making better use of assessment information, but practice is inconsistent in Key Stage 2.

Children are given a good start in the Foundation Stage where most make good progress because the teaching is good and the curriculum is well planned. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1. Standards have consistently been above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Despite good teaching in Years 5 and 6, standards are not improving at a fast enough rate in Years 3 to 6. Too few pupils are working at the expected level because the quality of teaching is not consistently good enough to ensure pupils make better progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

The pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory, although there are some notable strengths. A key feature is the strong Catholic ethos of the school. The pupils are a delight. They are polite and well behaved and enjoy coming to school. Attendance is good. Relationships in the school are very positive. Procedures for checking that the school is a safe and healthy place have not been carried out regularly. Within school pupils are looked after well with good support from a wide range of people. The length of the school day does not allow sufficient time to teach all curriculum areas in the required depth. The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements or the needs of all pupils, especially the more able.

The school's leaders have established procedures to assess and track pupils' progress, which provide them with a clear view of strengths and weaknesses. However, they have been too slow to tackle inconsistencies in teaching and underachievement in Key Stage 2. Too many strategies such as tracking and targeting identified pupils have been implemented recently, some inconsistently, and there has been too little time for them to impact on standards. Self-evaluation procedures are not rigorous enough in teasing out why some pupils do better than others. Senior managers and governors do not evaluate robustly enough the implementation and effectiveness of whole-school strategies to bring about improvements. For example, following the recent investment in information and communication technology hardware, school leaders are unclear about how well it is used or how it has raised standards in this subject .

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the school with standards broadly in line with those expected for their age and they settle very quickly into the Nursery and Reception classes. The warm welcome and high quality care offered by staff help children to become increasingly independent and confident

in their work and play. An exciting range of learning opportunities, both indoors and out, are carefully planned to build on what children already know and can do so that they make good progress. They approach tasks with enthusiasm and they cooperate well with one another, taking turns and sharing equipment. The quality of teaching is good and the Foundation Stage coordinator ensures that all staff are well briefed and activities planned for children help them to learn in interesting and stimulating ways. Adults regularly assess children's skills and knowledge and use this information fully to adapt the curriculum to support any weaker areas of development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards in Key Stage 2, particularly in Years 3 and 4.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that it is consistently good, to increase the rate of pupils' progress throughout the school.
- Improve the quality of monitoring and evaluation, ensuring that whole school strategies are implemented fully and evaluated carefully to check for their effectiveness.
- Review the timings of the school day and the curriculum so sufficient time is allocated to meet statutory requirements and the needs of all pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Children enter the Foundation Stage with the skills and knowledge expected for their age. Most make good progress. This continues throughout Key Stage 1 so that by the end of Year 2, standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2007, the national test results achieved by Year 6 pupils declined significantly in English, mathematics and science. Many pupils did not make the expected progress and failed to reach their targets. Since the previous inspection, school leaders have taken swift and decisive action to address issues in mathematics. These are securing improved rates of progress in Years 5 and 6. However, too many pupils are failing to make the expected progress. A significant number of pupils in Years 3 and 4 are falling behind in reading, writing and mathematics. Senior leaders have not focused sharply enough on these year groups. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress throughout the school because their needs are met. Although higher attaining pupils receive additional support, too few achieve at the level they are capable of.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

As pupils progress through the school they develop into caring young people who treat others with respect. Good relationships, including racial harmony, are a strength of the school and the strong Christian ethos helps pupils learn that they are all equally valued. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The vast majority of pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in the high level of attendance. Pupils say that 'teachers make learning fun' and are keen to do their best. Most are confident to share their opinions but some find it difficult to listen to others' ideas. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils feel safe and say that rare incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the community. Members of the school council are keen to make improvements to school life and prefects help around the school. Pupils understand the importance of keeping themselves safe and can turn to adults when they have concerns. Pupils

know how to live a healthy lifestyle, but the recommended two hours of physical education are not available for all pupils. Pupils' preparation for secondary school is inadequate because they are limited by their lack of achievement in basic skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The quality of teaching is inadequate because pupils in Key Stage 2 are not making sufficient progress. There is good teaching in Key Stage 1 and in Years 5 and 6. However, weaker teaching in Years 3 and 4 slows the progress of too many pupils. As a consequence, they have too much ground to make up by the end of the key stage despite increased rates of progress in Years 5 and 6. Pupils largely develop strong and positive working relationships with adults and they behave well. In some lessons, however, pupils, especially the more able, are given tasks which are too easy for them. As a result, they work at a slower pace and give less attention to good presentation. Where pupils are unclear as to the purpose of the lesson, it is hard for them to assess their own progress and consider ways in which they can improve. Where marking is most effective, pupils are given clear suggestions for how to improve. This practice is not consistently applied across all classes and this contributes to uneven rates of progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The curriculum is inadequate and this contributes to pupils' lack of progress in Key Stage 2. Pupils do not spend enough time in lessons each week to cover a broad and balanced curriculum and to enable them to develop the skills they need for learning in the future. This limits the range of topics they can study each year. Some classes do not have a daily literacy session and this limits pupils' progress in English and their ability to apply their writing skills in other subjects. Monitoring of the curriculum has not been systematic or rigorous enough to tackle areas of weakness. Pupils who need additional support are identified and targeted appropriately which helps some to catch up. The curriculum is extended by a range of clubs and sporting activities which pupils say they enjoy. Visitors to the school bring a wealth of knowledge of other cultures and pupils in Year 6 benefit, in particular, from an annual residential trip to Norfolk.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Adults ensure that there is good pastoral care for the pupils. Pupils are confident that if they have concerns, staff will deal with them promptly because relationships are good. Child protection procedures are appropriate, and staff are alert to signs that any pupil might be distressed or anxious. The school chaplain and the special needs coordinator provide good support for pupils when an emotional need arises. The required checks to ensure the school is as safe as possible have not been carried out regularly enough. Significant issues regarding aspects of care, health and safety have been brought to the school's attention. Although systems for tracking pupils' academic progress are thorough, some teachers do not use the information sufficiently well to inform their teaching. As a result of more checks by senior managers, pupils are now better targeted for additional support when the need is identified.

Targets for improving work are used well in Key Stage 1, but inconsistently in Key Stage 2. This does not provide pupils with the right information to help them improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The school has not made enough progress since it was previously inspected. Although senior leaders are committed to raising standards, they have not focused sharply enough on those year groups in Key Stage 2 where rates of learning are too slow. Subject leaders for mathematics and literacy have worked enthusiastically to implement change with good support from the local authority. Strategies for improvement, such as tracking and targeting pupils, are underway but they are not securing improvement consistently or rapidly enough. Consequently, all pupils do not learn as well as they can and too many fail to reach challenging targets. Pupils' experiences in classes are variable and their pace of learning is inconsistent, especially in Key Stage 2. Pupils' performance is monitored and the quality of teaching checked, although this is not yet robust enough to ensure the pupils' higher achievement in all year groups. Whilst governors are supportive of the school, they do not always hold the school sufficiently to account, particularly with regard to raising standards and improving achievement. The majority of parents are supportive of the school and what it provides for their children.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
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	4

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	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

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?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

13 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Gregory's Catholic Primary School, Northampton NN3 2BD

You may remember that we recently visited your school and this letter is to tell you about what we found. I would like to thank all of you for making us so welcome and being so polite and helpful. We had the chance to talk to many of you and it was really pleasing to hear about how much you enjoy school. You like your teachers and other helpers, and you always try to do your best. You are very caring and get on well with each other. You also told us that bullying is not an issue and that there is always someone to talk to if you have any problems. We would also like to thank your parents for filling in a form that gave us their views about the school.

Whilst these are some of the positive things, we think that overall the school is not doing a good enough job and we have asked the headteacher, teachers and governors to make some urgent improvements. Someone will visit the school in the next six months to check how well it is doing. There are times when teachers do not help you do as well as you could. Therefore, we have asked the school to make sure that teaching always helps you to make good progress. We have also asked the adults to improve the way they check up on how well you are learning so that they can keep making the right improvements for you. Finally, we want the school to lengthen the amount of time you are in school so that you can learn about more interesting subjects that you will all enjoy.

Mr Mcmorrow, the staff and the governors, want the school to continue to improve. You can help too by making sure you work hard all the time and always do your best.

Thank you once again for being so helpful.

Best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Weston Her Majesty's Inspector

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Paul Weston
Her Majesty's Inspector