

St Maria Goretti Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124325
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	314887
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2008
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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	228
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ray Chadwick
Headteacher	Rosemary Whitehead
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2004
School address	Aylesbury Road Bucknall Stoke-on-Trent ST2 0LY
Telephone number	01782 234737
Fax number	01782 234737

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2008
Inspection number	314887

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a popular average sized school that serves a large local authority housing estate. There is a higher than average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school other than at the normal time is above average.

The school is an extended school with provision for adult learning and parental support that is well used by the community. It has close links with the local church.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. In recent times, the school has experienced significant disruption to its staffing and to leadership and management through the loss of staff in key positions. This has had an adverse impact on the progress and achievement of some pupils. The headteacher has provided good leadership during this difficult period to rebuild the management team, and the school is now enabling all pupils to progress and achieve at a satisfactory rate.

Most children start school in the Foundation Stage with attainment well below what is normally expected, particularly in their communication, language and literacy. In the Nursery and Reception classes, children make satisfactory progress, although standards at the end of Reception are still well below average. In the rest of the school, pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve satisfactorily. Across the school, they make better progress in reading and mathematics than in writing. Progress in writing is inconsistent and the development of pupils' writing skills is better in some classes than others. By the end of Year 2, standards are well below national averages and for Year 6 pupils they are broadly in line with national averages, which reflects the higher starting points of these pupils compared to the children currently in the Foundation Stage.

The systems the school has put in place to track and check pupils' progress are used satisfactorily by teachers to plan their work for most pupils, although more able pupils do not always have work that challenges them enough. Teachers enjoy excellent relationships with pupils and engage them in their learning through interesting activities. The school has worked hard to share pupils' targets with them and pupils know what their targets are. Teachers' marking, however, does not always make clear to pupils what the next step in their learning is or when they have achieved their target. The curriculum provides pupils with a satisfactory range of activities and opportunities to practise and develop their skills and abilities. Leadership and management are satisfactory and subject leaders are beginning to have an effect on pupils' achievement through their checking of pupils' achievement.

A strong ethos of care and support is at the heart of the school's work and results in pupils reaching good standards in their personal development and well-being. This is a strength of the school. As a pupil commented, 'our teachers care and make work fun.' Pupils' behaviour is good and the positive attitudes they demonstrate towards their learning and their participation in the activities the school offers show a clear enjoyment of their education. They have a good awareness of how to stay safe and an appropriate understanding of how to live healthily. Their contribution to the school is good. Pupils make a good contribution to the life of the school, for example by serving on the school council or in the role of playground leaders. The pupils are polite, friendly and sensitive and are developing into mature young citizens. Pupils' satisfactory achievement and their positive attitudes to learning and responsibility mean that they are appropriately prepared for the next stage of their education.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

From their low starting point, children make satisfactory gains in learning in both the Nursery and Reception classes. However, they still enter Year 1 with standards which are well below what is expected. Children's progress in the Foundation Stage has been affected by long-term

staff illness and frequent changes of staff. These disruptions have also had a detrimental effect on the leadership and management of the Foundation Stage. As a result, procedures to check children's progress are not well developed. The teaching situation is now more stable and children's learning has improved. Children settle into the Nursery and Reception classes well. They enjoy a stimulating learning environment and benefit from well-planned and purposeful activities that engage and interest them. Singing games and rhymes help children gain confidence with their speaking and number recognition. Relationships between staff and children are excellent and, as a result, children develop confidence and make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the development of pupils' writing skills across all classes.
- Improve the levels of challenge for more able pupils.
- Improve marking so that all pupils know how to improve their work and when they have achieved their targets.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Across the school, pupils' achievement is broadly satisfactory. Standards at the end of Year 2 are well below the national average. Standards at the end of Year 6 are broadly average, reflecting a higher starting point for these pupils when they started school.

Pupils make better progress in their reading and mathematics than in their writing. Their rates of progress in writing vary from class to class because of differences in the way writing skills are taught. Recent initiatives to improve writing are not yet having enough effect on raising standards. Pupils in Year 1 are making satisfactory progress to rectify weaknesses in their prior learning which had been masked by previous inaccurate assessment. In Year 5, pupils are now progressing satisfactorily after slow progress because of weak teaching. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because of the support they receive from the adults working with them. More able pupils do not always make the progress they should because the work provided for them is not always sufficiently challenging.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school, as seen in their good behaviour, their excellent relationships and their positive attitudes to learning. They show sensible attitudes to the responsibilities they are given and gain confidence from knowing that their efforts will be acknowledged and celebrated. Their attendance has improved through the hard work of the school and is satisfactory. The strong ethos, which underpins the school's work, enables them to thrive. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, although their understanding of other cultures is not as strong as the other aspects of their development. Although pupils are aware of the importance of healthy living they do not always make healthy choices at lunchtime. They know how to stay safe and are confident that any instances of bullying will be dealt with effectively. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and local community. They enjoy taking harvest produce to

the local home for the elderly and the school council sensibly discusses ways to improve the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers manage pupils well and enjoy excellent relationships with them. Interesting activities engage pupils in their learning and pupils learn to work independently and in small groups. Teachers use the results of assessment to plan and set work for their classes, but more able pupils are not always set work that challenges them enough. They are often set the same work as other pupils and find it too easy. Marking makes clear to pupils what they have done well. The best marking makes clear to pupils what to do next to improve their work but this is not consistently done in all classes. Pupils are also encouraged to assess their own work in some classes, and these strategies are beginning to help improve their achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactorily planned and structured to meet the needs of most pupils, including pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It is broad and balanced and pupils are given satisfactory opportunities to use their basic skills in other subjects. In some subjects, there is too much reliance on the use of worksheets. The 'Big Writing Day' and the 'All Write Now' initiative are beginning to help pupils improve their achievement in writing by giving them opportunities to write longer pieces of work, but these developments are at an early stage in their impact on pupils' achievement. The programmes for personal, social and health education contribute to the strong, caring ethos of the school. The curriculum is appropriately enriched by visits and extra activities. Clubs are popular and well attended. A good range of visits and visitors such as artists, local police and church leaders enhances pupils' learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The high level of care shown by adults in the school enables all pupils to feel safe and secure. Staff understand and respond extremely sensitively to the needs of all the pupils in school. Vulnerable pupils are well supported and the home–school family worker rigorously supports families who need extra support. Good links with outside agencies ensure that pupils receive good additional support and the school links well with outside agencies to support the needs of vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The well-established routines, high expectations of behaviour and welcoming learning environment all contribute to the good levels of confidence and self-esteem pupils demonstrate. The arrangements for safeguarding pupils, and to ensure their health, safety and welfare are thorough. Pupils are comfortable in asking for help if they need it and say that the adults make them feel safe. Systems to support and guide pupils in their academic progress are in place. All pupils have targets and most know what they are and what they are aiming for, although not all are guided sufficiently well in how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has shown good leadership in guiding the school through a period of significant disruption to both the staff and the leadership and management of the school. The leadership team has been rebuilt to include more staff, and leadership at different levels has been developed to help the school overcome its problems. The capacity of the school to improve is satisfactory because staff have made a positive contribution to the school's self-evaluation processes and share the headteacher's vision for improving pupils' achievement, personal development and well-being. They are having a positive impact on pupils' achievement in their different roles. There are systems in place for checking and tracking pupils' progress, and teachers are making satisfactory use of these to improve pupils' achievement. Subject leaders are involved in monitoring standards and the quality of provision, but in some subject areas the strategies put in place have not had time to have a full effect on pupils' learning. All pupils are equally valued and have equal access to the opportunities that the school has to offer, although the school recognises that it has more to do to improve its provision for more able pupils. The governors know the school well and fulfil their statutory duties. Most parents express positive views about the school and have confidence in its work.

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
---	----------------

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	3
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?	2

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	3
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

14 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Maria Goretti Catholic Primary School, Bucknall, ST2 0LY

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we visited your school. We thought that you were extremely polite and friendly. We enjoyed talking to you and listening to what you had to say. We know you like your school and enjoy going there. We think that St Maria Goretti Catholic Primary School is a satisfactory school with some strengths. These are the main things we found out about your school.

- You make satisfactory progress in your work.
- You behave well, like coming to school and enjoy your learning.
- You have excellent relationships with each other and your teachers. You told us that your teachers care for you and are 'like your friends.'
- You are provided with interesting clubs and activities.
- You are well looked after by all the adults in school.
- All the adults in school work hard to help you to do your best.

In order to make the school better, we have asked the staff to:

- improve your achievement in writing
- provide more difficult and challenging work for the more able ones amongst you
- make sure that marking in every class helps you know how to improve your work and when you have achieved your targets.

Best wishes

Brian Holmes Lead inspector