

St Gregory's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125709
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	315291
Inspection dates	2–3 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Ken Buxton 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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Meg Sanders
Headteacher	Michael Caveney
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2004
School address	Avenue Road Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 6UZ
Telephone number	01789 204517
Fax number	01789 261717

Age group	4–11
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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

The school serves a wide catchment area that includes all of Stratford-upon-Avon and the surrounding villages. Most of the pupils come from White British families, although there are a small number of children from Eastern Europe with English as an Additional Language (EAL). The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) at the school is similar to the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school, exceeding the expectations of the vast majority of the parents. A significant number of parents completed Ofsted's questionnaire, and responses provided a very strong indication of how very satisfied they are with the school. Pupils' personal development is outstanding and is a particular strength of the school. By the time pupils leave the school, they are confident learners who have achieved well. This is because the school is fortunate to have a dedicated, committed and very hardworking headteacher whose leadership style encourages a genuine team approach.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. Pupils understand the feelings of others, respond sensitively to each other and have an exceptional awareness of the needs of those less fortunate. They also make an outstanding contribution to the local and wider community, particularly through their work with the parish church and their support for a wide variety of charities. For example, they sponsor Taz, a hearing dog for the deaf, and they learn how to sign.

Teachers know their pupils well. They are committed to providing a high quality learning experience for the pupils and work hard to help pupils achieve their potential. Teaching in the Foundation Stage ensures that pupils are prepared well for the start of Key Stage 1. Pupils make good progress in reading and writing through Key Stage 1 but the standards achieved in mathematics are below the national average. Progress picks up in Key Stage 2 so that by the end of Year 6, the pupils achieve standards in English, mathematics and science that are above average. This is a result of the good quality of teaching, which enables pupils to make good progress in lessons.

The headteacher's strong leadership has ensured that the school has taken effective steps to promote improvement since the last inspection. For example, information and communication technology (ICT) is now much more effective. Standards have risen in Key Stage 2 because of actions taken. The school is well placed to improve its effectiveness because its self-evaluation and analyses of its position are accurate. The targets that it sets are well chosen – for example, it is well aware that mathematics standards need to improve in Key Stage 1. However, for efficient improvement, some of its systems need fine-tuning. Improvement actions are planned carefully but evaluation of whether or not actions taken have improved standards is not always focused enough. Similarly, subject leaders tend to monitor in too general a way, rather than trying to follow through a closely defined focus. This results in the corresponding improvement actions also being less effectively focused.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children have a wide range of experiences and abilities on entry but generally, their attainment is that expected for children of this age. The teaching ensures that children settle quickly and that they are happy, curious and keen to learn. The curriculum is good and there is an effective balance between adult-led and child-selected activities. This ensures that the children quickly develop independence and confidence. Children enjoy coming to school and say that they like 'all the toys and teachers'. The good provision they receive ensures that they make swift progress and that they are ready and prepared well for the start of Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- raise standards in mathematics in Key Stage 1
- make better use of measurable success criteria to monitor the impact of improvement initiatives
- target subject leaders' monitoring activities towards specific issues so that the resulting initiatives are focused more effectively on raising standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children join the school at the start of the Reception Year with standards that are broadly similar to the national average. At the end of the Foundation Stage, the children's attainment is slightly above the average and they are prepared well for the start of Key Stage 1.

The unvalidated results of the 2007 assessments at Key Stage 1 show that standards are above average in reading and writing but below average in mathematics. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' standards are above average. The English results show a steady upward trend and the 2006 results for mathematics and science show an upturn in pupils' attainment. The provisional results for the 2007 tests confirm that pupils' standards continue to be above average. Overall achievement in the school is good.

The school's focus on English has enabled pupils to improve the standards they attain and, as a consequence, pupils' attainment in English is slightly better than in mathematics and science. Standards in mathematics have risen in Key Stage 2, and the school is now focusing on raising achievement in mathematics at Key Stage 1.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The way in which the school promotes pupils' personal development and well-being is exemplary. Pupils' attendance levels are good and improving. They are keen to come to school and their positive attitudes are reflected in the work that they do and the enjoyment that they have. Their growing knowledge of, and respect for, other cultures and faiths are good. They are fully aware of the difference between right and wrong. They are polite and considerate to adults and each other. Pupils enjoy the responsibilities that they are given and take them seriously. Council members' faces glowed with pride when they talked about their achievements and the changes that they have brought about.

Pupils appreciate the peer mentor system that supports those in need. They recognise that the mentors help to maintain the outstanding quality of behaviour that exists throughout the school. The school's comprehensive programme for personal, social and health education ensures that pupils have a very good awareness about keeping safe and building good life skills. They also have a good understanding of the need to develop healthy lifestyles. They thoroughly enjoy sport and eagerly take part in the wide variety of physical activities outside the school day.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers plan carefully for all ability groups so that pupils are enabled to make the progress expected during lessons. Importantly, teachers are increasingly making lessons fun and focusing learning opportunities on activities that capture pupils' imagination and excitement. This was particularly evident as Year 3 pupils spoke excitedly about the archaeological dig that they had just returned from.

Teachers are becoming increasingly confident in making good and effective use of ICT in lessons. For example, in mathematics, teachers are introducing new software which is helping to make learning more interesting. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to the effectiveness of lessons by providing pupils with good quality support. Teachers brief them well beforehand and deploy them appropriately to guide individuals and small groups of pupils. This good quality team working ensures that pupils are enabled to make good progress during most lessons. In a few lessons, teachers do not make best use of time and, as a result, the pace of the lesson is too slow which results in some pupils becoming restless. In addition, teachers are not always focusing sufficiently on enabling pupils to take responsibility for reviewing their own learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well organised, relevant and motivates pupils. It prepares pupils well for the future. The focus on French, physical education activities, specialist music and design technology teaching and the 'Forest' classroom broadens the provision most effectively. There is a good emphasis on developing pupils' English and mathematical skills in these subject lessons. The opportunities for pupils to apply these skills in other subject areas are, however, limited. Pupils have excellent opportunities for developing their collaborative skills, which ensures that they also develop skills in speaking and listening and teamwork. The curriculum for pupils with LDD is matched well to their abilities and needs. An extensive range of activities outside lessons makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' enjoyment and achievement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The welfare of the pupils is at the heart of the school's work. Pupils with LDD and pupils from different ethnic groups and different countries are integrated completely into the life of the school. Parents are confident that the pupils are safe and well cared for, and the inspectors fully agree. The school carries out health and safety checks on a regular basis and rigorous assessments are made before pupils participate in residential or day visits. Child protection arrangements work very well. Vulnerable pupils are identified and monitored regularly.

Pupils are well advised and guided in their personal development. The academic guidance pupils receive is less effective. This is because teachers' marking does not make clear how pupils can do better by explaining in detail what they need to do next to achieve individual targets. The school provides good support and guidance for pupils who have LDD, those who have behavioural problems and those whose main language is not English.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school and its future development. This has been gained from systematic monitoring which has helped to identify the school's strengths and improvement priorities. His strong lead inspires great confidence within all members of the community, who hold him in very high regard. Parents praise the strong leadership and the team of teachers, whom they see as genuinely caring for the children. The inspection team could not find any evidence to substantiate the small number of critical points raised in questionnaires; nevertheless, the headteacher intends to address these parents' perceptions as a matter of urgency.

The headteacher receives good support from his colleagues who have leadership responsibilities. The subject leaders have a good understanding of standards and achievement in their specific areas of responsibility, analysing assessment data carefully to identify areas in need of improvement. Their other monitoring activities and the whole-school evaluation of the success of initiatives are less tightly focused. Governors have a good understanding of their role and responsibilities. They hold the school to account well and ensure that it obtains good value for money. They make a significant contribution to the school's development through the creation and implementation of their improvement plan. The plan is appropriate but it does not state clearly enough how current improvement priorities are intended to raise standards.

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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?	2
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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
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	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

4 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Gregory's Catholic Primary School, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 6UZ

Thank you for welcoming Mrs Robertson and me when we visited your school at the beginning of October 2007 to see how well it was doing.

We think you are very lucky to go to such a good school. Your headteacher does a good job of running the school and making sure that you are looked after well and make good progress. He is supported well by the staff, who work hard to deliver lessons that you find interesting and so help you to learn. Some of you told us about how exciting you found it to become an archaeologist for an afternoon and discover historical artefacts that had been buried in the ground. We were impressed with how you then went on to use your research skills well to identify that the objects came from the Anglo-Saxon period. We think that this kind of fun activity helps to make your school what it is today and so encourages you to want to learn.

We were also very impressed with the wide range of activities that you are involved in during lunchtimes and after school and think that these add wonderful opportunities for you to try out different experiences.

We have asked the adults in charge of the school to improve the school in a few areas – for example, the younger ones do not do quite as well in mathematics as they do in English. The school leaders already have lots of plans to make things even better so we have asked them to check carefully how well their ideas work in practice. We have also asked the teachers in charge of subjects to focus on specific things when they check on what is going on.

We hope that your school continues to flourish and we wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Ken Buxton HMI

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