

St Gregory's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104678
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	324088
Inspection dates	9–10 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Jim Crouch

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	209
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Anna Dunn
Headteacher	Mrs P Melia
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Montreal Road Netherley Liverpool Merseyside L27 7AG

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	9–10 October 2008
Inspection number	324088

Telephone number

0151 498 4313

Fax number

0151 487 3794

Age group 3–11

Inspection dates 9–10 October 2008

Inspection number 324088

© 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 average-sized school serves a residential area to the east of Liverpool that experiences high levels of unemployment and social disadvantage. In September 2007 it took in a significant number of additional pupils as a result of the closure of a nearby school. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The number of pupils with a statement of special educational need is below average. The school makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and holds the Advanced Inclusion Chartermark, Basic Skills Chartermark, Activemark and Healthy Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a caring school which provides a satisfactory standard of education and has taken effective steps to promote improvement since the last inspection. In recent years it has experienced some staffing problems which have contributed to a drop in standards by the end of Year 6. Recent appointments and changes to the management structure have enabled the school to place a greater emphasis on tracking pupils' progress and addressing areas of underperformance. An emphasis on these developments has led the school to overestimate the effectiveness of most aspects of its work; however, it is not yet able to demonstrate the impact of the changes so far on pupils' progress.

Visitors to the school very quickly feel welcome because of the positive relationships and sense of community which are strong features of St Gregory's. The pupils are open and honest and talk enthusiastically about what makes them enjoy school so much. They feel safe and show a good awareness of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, choosing to eat fruit at break and joining in the good range of sporting activities provided by the school. The Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; is good with, for example, school assemblies providing good opportunities for pupils to reflect on how they can contribute to improving the lives of others. Pupils contribute well to the life of the school and the local community, through, for example, the work of the school council and its representatives on Liverpool's School Parliament. Attendance levels are satisfactory and improving because of the high quality intervention work by the school and, in particular, the learning mentor.

Achievement is satisfactory. Children enter the EYFS provision with skills and abilities that are well below those expected for their age. They make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes so that when they enter Key Stage 1 their attainment is still below, but closer to, the nationally expected level. However, pupils make satisfactory progress through Key Stages 1 and 2. Consequently, standards by the end of Year 6 are generally below average. More able pupils are not sufficiently challenged and do not progress as well as they might across both the key stages. Teaching is satisfactory overall. In the strongest lessons teachers and teaching assistants work well together to ensure that all pupils are challenged and take an active part in the lesson. As a result, pupils are eager to learn, persevere well with activities and respond positively to encouragement. The good curriculum provides an effective balance between developing basic skills and broadening pupils' horizons and awareness of the world in which they live. It is enriched through a good range of extra-curricular activities and many school visits. Care, guidance and support overall are good. The school works well with a wide range of partner organisations to promote pupils' well-being. Parents say that staff are approachable and supportive and that the school keeps them well informed of the progress their children are making.

Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and senior leaders have a clear vision for the school. They are aware of the barriers to learning that many of their pupils face and show a determination to address individual pupils' needs and raise their aspirations. The school works well with parents and a wide range of partner organisations. There is a common sense of purpose within the staff and a willingness to take on new challenges.

Some recent long-term absences and a year with no deputy headteacher reduced the school's capacity to monitor pupils' progress, initiate change and evaluate its work. The recent appointments of a deputy headteacher and two other posts of responsibility have already led

to improvements in teaching and learning, the curriculum and the tracking of pupils' progress. As a result, the school has satisfactory capacity to improve and gives satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children join the Nursery with below average skills, particularly in language, literacy and personal development. They make good progress in their learning during the EYFS so that by the end of their Reception year they are close to national expectations in personal development, but weaker in language and literacy. Through the good quality care and commitment by staff, children's induction into Nursery and transition into Reception is well planned and from the youngest age they feel safe and happy. Consequently, the personal development and well-being of the children is good. Children in the Reception class experience outstanding teaching and support from staff to help them learn and develop. Whilst leadership and management overall are satisfactory, the role of the Early Years Foundation Stage manager is not clearly defined. The geography of the building means that the Nursery and Reception classes are located at opposite ends of the building, and this is not helpful. Planning for focused activities in the Nursery and the quality of intervention occasionally lack rigour. Observations of children's learning are recorded regularly in both classes to provide a coherent picture of each child's development over time. The indoor areas are interesting and provide a relevant and appropriate focus on personal development and basic skills, as well as the wider curriculum. The secure, outside learning areas are being improved to provide the same levels of challenge and stimulation, especially for the more capable children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the leadership and organisation of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

-Raise standards in English, mathematics and science and in particular increase the achievement of the more able pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2.

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 their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils start Year 1 with skills and abilities that are lower than those expected for their age. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout Key Stage 1 and reach standards which overall are below average. The standards girls reach are a little higher than those of the boys. Standards at Key Stage 2 have shown a decline since 2005 and are now below average, particularly in science. In 2007 all groups of pupils made satisfactory progress. The provisional results of the Key Stage 2 tests in 2008 and school data indicate that attainment overall was below the levels expected of pupils in Year 6 and in science well below the expected level. However, given their relatively low starting points and the disruption to learning for the significant number of pupils who joined this cohort at the beginning of Year 6, pupils' overall progress was satisfactory, including for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school met its aspirational targets for the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 in English and mathematics, but did not meet its targets for Level 5. Consequently, as in Key Stage 1, the more able pupils did not

achieve as well as they should. The school has introduced a number of strategies to raise standards, including a new system for tracking pupils' progress. As a result, pupils are beginning to make better progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school because as they say 'You work and learn and on a Friday you can get a trophy or a treat if you have done well'. They behave well around school and in class and respond positively to encouragement. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory. They are confident that there is little bullying and that 'no one is left out,' because they make good use of the systems the school has put in place to promote positive relationships, such as the friendship stop and buddies. Pupils welcome visitors by holding doors open and smiling, or saying hello. They show a good awareness of how to stay safe by, for example, joining the walking bus. They know how to live healthy lifestyles and are extremely proud of their contribution to the fitness world record in next year's Guinness Book of Records. The school's strong emphasis on working together and supporting others is reflected in activities such as their charity work for Uganda and 'bring your grandparents to school afternoon'. Pupils work well together in class and listen to each other's opinions before coming to decisions. The school's clear focus on improving pupils' basic skills, especially in literacy and numeracy, means that pupils are making satisfactory progress in preparing for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. A significant number of lessons are good or better, but in those which are not, planning does not set an appropriate level of challenge, particularly for the more able. As a result, some pupils do not progress as well as they might. Teachers are confident and have good relationships with pupils. They make good use of praise and rewards and pupils are keen to contribute to lessons because they know their ideas will be valued. In the better lessons teachers use a good range of strategies and make good use of technology to bring lessons to life. Teaching assistants usually contribute well. They provide effective support in class and are skilled in working with individuals to raise levels of literacy and numeracy. However, sometimes in the weaker lessons, particularly during teacher-led activities, they do not contribute as well as they might.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has worked hard to develop a curriculum that takes account of pupils' needs and the environment in which they live in order to raise their aspirations. An appropriate amount of time is devoted to developing literacy, numeracy and other basic skills and there is good additional provision for those who need it. The school has adopted a topic-based approach to some of its curriculum to increase pupils' motivation and progress. For example, a topic on water puts the teaching of aspects of history, geography, science and physical education into a more enjoyable and meaningful context and provides good opportunities for pupils to practise and extend their literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills. The school has taken some steps to enrich the curriculum for the more able students; by, for

example, running a Spanish Club, but activities to challenge and extend are not regular enough. The curriculum contributes well to pupils personal development through activities such as the health and fitness week and work on how to stay safe. In addition, a good range of extra-curricular activities extend learning and increase pupils' enjoyment of school. The school works well in partnership with other organisations to enrich the curriculum and promote pupils' cultural awareness.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents recognise and value the high levels of care and support provided by the school. They are fulsome in their praise for staff, who 'bring out the best in their children' and 'try to involve not only the children, but also the parents, school activities'. Pupils who join the school other than at the usual time say they settle in very quickly because of the good arrangements made by the school. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are in place and meet government requirements. The school's extremely dedicated and enthusiastic learning mentor provides outstanding support. She has built strong partnerships with families and outside agencies. As a result, pupils feel confident to discuss issues which may be worrying them. Targets in English and mathematics are clearly set and pupils' progress towards them is assessed by teachers. Pupils are also regularly asked to check if they are meeting them. However, pupils are often not advised as to what they have achieved having completed a piece of work or what they need to do next to improve. The many pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support, but individual education plans vary in quality.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and governors are committed to St Gregory's being an inclusive school for all. They show a determination to meet the needs of the pupils and the community the school serves. Its good commitment to community cohesion is demonstrated through its links with its parish, a local youth and community initiative and establishments in Africa. The headteacher gives clear direction and a well managed programme of staff development means that staff are confident in their roles and well prepared to take on responsibilities. Middle leaders generally manage their areas effectively and contribute to whole-school improvement, although the leadership of the EYFS lacks clarity. Through their satisfactory self-evaluation, senior leaders have a clear view of the strengths of the school and of areas for improvement, gained through, for example, the regular observations of lessons. However, it is too soon to confirm the impact of these on achievement and standards. In recent years, the governing body has experienced some problems in recruiting and retaining members. These have been resolved and governors are now discharging their responsibilities satisfactorily. They are developing a good range of actions to increase their involvement in the life of the school and their capacity to support and challenge.

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 learners' needs?	3
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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of St Gregory's Catholic Primary School, Liverpool, L27 7AG

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and being so polite and friendly. The inspectors enjoyed talking to you and hearing all of the things you like about your school.

We found that your school gives you a satisfactory education. We were particularly impressed by your good behaviour and your keenness to do well in lessons. You show good awareness of the needs of others through your charity work and the way in which pupils new to the school are welcomed by you all. The staff have worked hard to help you enjoy your education by developing a good curriculum with lots of extra activities and visits. We found that your school looks after you well and that you make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, you make satisfactory progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 because teaching overall is satisfactory.

There are two important things we think could be better. I have asked the school to improve the management and organisation of the Early Years Foundation Stage and to make sure that pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 reach higher standards and that the more able pupils, in particular, make better progress.

Of course, you also have an important part to play in helping your school to carry on improving. You can do this by continuing to be as positive about learning as you are now and keep trying to improve all aspects of your work.

Thanks again for making us feel so welcome.