

St Gerard's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 106941 |
| Local Authority | Rotherham |
| Inspection number | 324492 |
| Inspection dates | 2–3 July 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Carmen Markham |

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.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 126 |
| 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 | Mr C MacCormac |
| Headteacher | Mrs Patricia Lunn |
| Date of previous school inspection | 25 January 2006 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Park Nook Doncaster Road Thrybergh Rotherham South Yorkshire S65 4AE |

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|--------------------------|---------------|
| Age group | 4–11 |
| Inspection dates | 2–3 July 2009 |
| Inspection number | 324492 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

In this smaller than average size school most pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. Children attend a variety of pre-school provision before entering the Reception class at the age of four years. The school is situated in an area of some social deprivation. The percentage of pupils entitled to a free school meal is above the national average and increasing. A higher than average proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Nearly all pupils are White British but an increasing number of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. A very small number of pupils speak a home language that is not English. The school has suffered staffing difficulties recently, particularly in Key Stage 2. The school holds the Excellence in Enterprise Award from the University of Warwick.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Gerard's is a satisfactory school. There are strengths in the outstanding quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the excellent behaviour and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school also makes good use of well-developed partnerships with others to promote pupils' well-being and learning. It is an inclusive learning community much valued by parents who typically say, 'this is a very welcoming school where staff are skilled, kind and helpful. They get parents involved in children's achievement and pay attention to moral values.'

The children get off to an exceptional start to their schooling in Reception. In this small school standards can vary year-on-year depending on the relative starting points of the individuals. Inspection evidence and school tracking systems show that pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards by the end of Key Stage 1 are generally below average in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 6, standards vary, but overall they are below average in English, mathematics and science. The school has improved its provision for more-able pupils and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This is starting to lead to improved progress for these pupils. Well-planned support enables pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make good progress, while challenging targets motivate the more-able pupils who take increasing responsibility for their learning. However, middle ability pupils have not had the benefit of such effective additional learning programmes. Lessons do not always present these pupils with sufficient challenge to help them move forwards at a swifter pace. In addition, many pupils have only made satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2, because of the significant number of staffing changes, which have led to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning.

The leadership and management team are led by an able headteacher. School leaders know the strengths of the school and the areas that need to be developed. They also plan effectively to improve provision and welcome advice, support and training from local partnerships. Staff teams have been reorganised to ensure a spread of expertise throughout the school. The governors have supported the school steadily during recent staffing turbulence and a full complement of staff is expected to be in place for the start of the new academic school year.

The curriculum and its use of exciting themes and topics motivates pupils to learn. Together with good care, guidance and support this ensures pupils' good personal development, particularly, in relation to being knowledgeable about and responsible for their health and safety. Pupils enjoy school and have an excellent understanding of how to live healthily. They readily encourage others to stay fit and healthy and explain how to avoid taking unnecessary risks. They make a good contribution to and value working with their local community and meeting people from a range of social and cultural groups. Provision for community cohesion is good. Pupils are aware of the importance of financial planning and enterprise and participate with enthusiasm in the enterprise project where learners develop skills for life and a positive work ethic.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Reception provides an exceptional start to the children's education. High quality care alongside supportive, but demanding teaching has meant that the children have made overall good progress. Most children enter the Reception class with skills well below the expectations for typical four-year-olds. They generally achieve well, in relation to their starting points, in all

areas of learning. Although attainment at the end of Reception has generally been below expected levels, currently most children are making faster progress and are working well within the early learning goals. High quality leadership and management ensure that teaching takes account of the abilities and specific needs of all the children. There are excellent relationships between adults and children. Very well organised routines and learning activities help children settle in very quickly. The quality of care and support is outstanding. Children's welfare is given high priority and this is an important key in helping them to flourish and feel safe. It also results in children's outstanding personal, social and emotional development and excellent behaviour and attitudes. Teaching assistants provide very good support to all children, including those with additional needs, and very good use is made of outside agencies to enrich the curriculum further. The provision has improved the support provided to help parents support their children's learning and this has made a considerable difference to children's progress this year.

Adults plan activities extremely well and make excellent use of high quality outdoor provision. Children move safely and enthusiastically between activities and quickly grow in confidence. A very good balance is maintained between teaching children new skills and encouraging them to explore an excellent range of resources to nurture their independence. Very effective strategies are used to develop reading and writing skills, in particular. Questions are used very effectively to encourage children to speak in sentences and to talk about what they have learned.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching in Key Stage 2, especially with regard to the level of challenge provided for middle ability pupils.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged as 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

Although year groups tend to be small, inspection evidence and school data shows that pupils make satisfactory progress throughout Years 1 to 6. When pupils enter Year 1, standards are generally below national expectations. By the end of Year 2, their achievement is satisfactory and standards remain below average. Pupils generally exceed their personal targets in reading, writing and mathematics, although no pupils reach the higher Level 3 in writing. By the end of Year 6, standards, although they vary year-on-year, are below average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 6 is satisfactory. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those who speak English as an additional language and the more-able make good progress as the school is effective in meeting their needs as they are provided with well targeted support. Parents value this contribution and write that, 'every effort is made to ensure that able pupils do not get bored by setting them demanding goals and enabling them to attend master classes'. However, inspection evidence indicates that too many middle ability pupils make satisfactory progress when they could do better if the work they are set is at a more challenging level.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development lies at the heart of this caring school. Adults effectively model the values and behaviour that reflect Christian principles and the school's mission statement. Therefore, pupils are confident in reflecting on their beliefs and in their relationships with others. They feel safe in school, trust adults and say there is always someone to go to, who will sort out any problems. A strong sense of right and wrong, together with a clear understanding of their own rules and responsibilities, results in polite, very well behaved pupils, who enjoy their learning. Attendance is average. A small minority of pupils need additional support to manage their feelings and to encourage them to attend school regularly. Pupils have an outstanding understanding of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle and regularly make healthy choices. They have good opportunities to contribute to their local community and beyond by, for example, supporting the local home for senior citizens and becoming involved in church projects. Through the school council they have a developing awareness of citizenship, both locally and globally. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the world of work through the opportunities they have to manage their own budgets, for example, in managing the healthy tuck shop, and the many excellent enterprise links within the curriculum.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Teaching in Key Stage 2 has been inconsistent, largely due to the turnover of staff. This has been a major factor in preventing standards from rising. This, coupled with a lack of challenge for the middle ability pupils in some lessons, has hampered pupils from making better than satisfactory progress. Teachers' planning meets the needs of the higher and lower ability pupils and so they make good progress. Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning and usually enjoy their lessons as relationships are very good. They want to succeed and value the praise, rewards and encouragement that their efforts bring. Teachers regularly assess pupils' work to check on pupils' progress. Marking is informative. Pupils have targets so that they know how well they are doing and how to improve their work. Good use is made of a range of resources, including information and communication technology (ICT). Teachers use questioning well to challenge pupils' thinking and teaching assistants are used very effectively to support pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a rich, balanced and inclusive curriculum, which is successful in meeting most learners' needs. A cross-curricular, thematic approach enriches pupils' learning experiences by making links between subjects, where the basic skills of writing and numeracy can be applied and further developed. This approach also motivates pupils and provides a context for their learning. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of clubs and out-of-school activities, for example, Year 5 and Year 6 residential experience in Filey. Visitors into school further enhance pupils' learning opportunities in, for example, music and French. Provision for ICT is good and used well to enhance learning across a range of subject areas. Sporting activities are well supported by good links to the local Sports College. The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' personal and social development and their understanding of enterprise.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support and this is reflected in its inclusive and caring ethos. Parents agree that their children are well cared for and safe in school and appreciate the steps taken to involve parents in the learning community. Safeguarding and child protection procedures securely meet government requirements and arrangements for health and safety are robust. Good strategies and support are in place to improve pupils' attendance and these have been effective in raising it to an average level. A strong team of skilled teaching assistants works closely with teachers to help pupils overcome any barriers to learning. Close links with a wide range of agencies including the Local Support Service and Thrybergh Community Learning Partnership enhance this support further. Improved data to track pupils' progress has ensured that teachers know their pupils' needs exceptionally well and can identify where additional support is needed. Additional support provided for pupils is often individual and usually highly effective. All pupils know their targets, levels and what they need to do to improve their work. Transition arrangements for pupils transferring to high school are good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school have some strengths. It is supported satisfactorily by committed governors who readily contribute their skills to the development of the school community. Since the previous inspection, the school has made progress in establishing a happy learning community. All pupils, regardless of background, are equally valued and supported. The school welcomes children and their families and works with the local community learning programme to ensure that all are able to access learning and support and develop confidence. Parents benefit from many courses to improve their knowledge and understanding of how they can help their children to learn. Strong links to schools that serve different social and cultural populations, and links to the local and global communities, are enabling the school to enhance pupils' understanding of different communities. The school is very active in its support for world church communities. The management team has evaluated the school's needs effectively and planned well for improvement. Good systems to assess and monitor pupils' progress and to set challenging targets have been put in place to raise standards. Teachers have been supported to help them to develop their skills through additional training and the good links made with other schools and external agencies. The impact of this is evident in the improving progress of some pupils. However, despite careful planning and good teamwork, the staffing difficulties in Key Stage 2 have placed additional demands on a small teaching force and consequently the quality of teaching has been inconsistent. This has been particularly so in relation to expectations of pupils' work and in the implementation of various policies. Capacity for further improvement is, therefore, satisfactory. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| 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

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|---|---|
| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS? | 1 |
| 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? | 1 |
| How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop? | 1 |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted? | 1 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 1 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| 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 | 2 |

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 | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| 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 | 1 |
| 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

| | |
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| 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 | 2 |
| 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**

I would like to thank you for making me so welcome in your school. You were all very helpful and polite and displayed a lot of enthusiasm for your work. I admired the displays of your work, particularly the section on persuasive writing. I also liked the beautiful artwork that some of you had designed, inspired by your work in religious education. I was very impressed by all your targets displayed around the school and how well you understand what you need to do to improve your work.

Your headteacher and the staff are all working hard to improve your school. You attend a satisfactory school that has some important strengths. Children in the Reception class get off to an excellent start. The staff look after you well and you feel safe and happy in school. You make satisfactory progress. Teachers make sure that they involve you in a lot of interesting activities and visits, including many visits to places you will have heard about in your history lessons. The Year 5 and 6 residential visit to Filey enables you to experience wonderful outdoor activities and, on your return to school, produce some excellent written descriptions of your experiences.

Your behaviour is excellent so you are able to listen and learn. You take very good care of each other so that you can all enjoy school. Most of you attend school regularly and arrive on time. You know how to stay healthy and safe and make the most of all the exciting activities the school provides during and after school, including all the musical opportunities including class clarinet lessons and specialist singing lessons.

One of the reasons for my visit was to see how your school can improve. I have asked the school to make sure that you all do better in English, mathematics and science. I have also asked your school leaders to make sure that you are all taught as well as each other, especially in Key Stage 2, so that you all are challenged in lessons to make the best possible progress.