

St Gregorys Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111327
Local Authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	325350
Inspection dates	31 March –1 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Kevin Johnson

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	90
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 Chris Butcher
Headteacher	Mr John Daley
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Albert Road Bollington Macclesfield Cheshire SK10 5HS

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	31 March –1 April 2009
Inspection number	325350

Telephone number
Fax number

01625 572037
01625 562015

Age group	4-11
Inspection dates	31 March -1 April 2009
Inspection number	325350

© Crown copyright 2009

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 one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized school. Almost all pupils are White British. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is very low. A broadly average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage begins in the Reception class. St Gregory's has gained Healthy Schools status and Activemark. The school has been through an unsettled period of leadership and experienced significant changes in teaching staff since the previous inspection. The current headteacher was appointed in 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Gregory's provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. They are well cared for and their personal development is outstanding. The school is appropriately placed to build on the stability and improvements achieved recently under the headteacher's determined leadership.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their behaviour and relationships are exemplary. Pupils' excellent attendance and punctuality are witness to their great enjoyment of school. This is endorsed by the comment from pupils such as 'The teachers and all the people are really nice.' Pupils feel safe in school and adamant that there is no bullying or racism. They have good awareness of other faiths and cultures and show concern for communities in need, for example by raising funds for a water supply in an African village. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of a sensible diet and the need for exercise. They choose healthy options at lunchtime and are very keen on sports. Pupils make a very good contribution to daily school life and work increasingly with partners outside of school to develop the skills they need to help secure their future economic well-being.

Pupils achieve satisfactorily. From starting in Reception with abilities broadly typical for their age they make satisfactory progress and reach average standards overall by the end of Year 6. Standards and progress have fluctuated over time at both key stages. Lack of continuity in leadership and inconsistencies in teaching and challenge, especially for the more able pupils caused standards and achievement to dip. The school has taken action to raise standards and has had a fair measure of success. In 2008 standards rose at the end of Key Stage 1 and there are promising signs of improvement in the current Year 6. Nevertheless, the school recognises that overall standards in English are held back because of pupils' weaker writing. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very well planned and managed. Consequently, they make good and sometimes rapid progress.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. More stringent monitoring is bringing about improvement: some lessons are good and, for some pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, some teaching is outstanding. However, the overall quality is inconsistent. Relationships in lessons are generally good. Most lesson plans are sound and show clear objectives for learning. However, these are not always matched well to individual pupils' varying abilities because teachers do not always assess pupils' skills accurately enough. The practice of involving pupils in assessing and helping to plot their own progress is not embedded. The curriculum is satisfactory. There is appropriate emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils' learning, their personal development as well as their enjoyment of school are greatly enriched by an extensive range of additional activities.

The headteacher has brought much-needed stability to the school. He has drawn together a hard-working staff team whose members are committed to further improvement. However, the leadership and management roles and accountability of senior staff and subject leaders are not clearly established and this slows the pace of improvement, for example, in developing the curriculum. As a result, self-evaluation, although broadly accurate, is occasionally optimistic. The deputy headteacher, who joined the school in 2009, has begun to share with the headteacher the critical task of monitoring the school's performance and planning improvement. Recently installed assessment systems provide a clearer overview of standards and a basis for more challenging targets.

St Gregory's is an inclusive community which promotes equality of opportunity well. Community cohesion is promoted satisfactorily. It has increasing importance on the school's agenda and is regarded as an essential part of the school's Christian ethos. There are sound plans to build on the already well-established links locally by planning their development as an integral part of the curriculum and to develop the embryonic links with schools in Britain and abroad. Governors make a satisfactory contribution to school development. They are supportive of the school and committed to its success. Their efficient management of the budget ensures satisfactory value for money. Given the increasing rigour of the school's monitoring and the promising impact seen in standards, there is satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is managed satisfactorily. Children make steady progress. When they enter Reception most have expected skills for their age, and some are more advanced. By the end of their first year almost all the children work securely within or achieve the early learning goals. Personal, social and emotional development is promoted well. Children behave very well and respond to adults promptly. They form friendships, share activities and show good levels of confidence and independence. Staff plan an appropriate balance between activities led by adults and those which children choose for themselves. Children enjoy exploring ideas in the outside area which have been introduced in the classroom. A strength of provision is the way in which all staff members involve themselves in activities with children to stimulate imaginative play and develop language and communication skills. Provision for children's welfare is good overall. Teachers have created a bright and stimulating environment where children feel secure and happy. There are positive links with parents and carers and staff work to extend these so that parents are more involved in supporting their children's learning. All adults share the role of observing children's progress and recording day-to-day achievements, but assessments to pinpoint children's starting points are not accurate enough to ensure that the next steps planned always provide the most suitable challenge for all children to bring about their best progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing throughout the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that a greater proportion is good or better.
- Embed assessment strategies to match work more closely to pupils' needs and also to help pupils gauge how well they doing.
- Clarify the roles of those with management responsibilities to increase the pace of improvement.

A small proportion of the 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

Standards at the end of Year 2 were above average overall in reading, writing and mathematics in 2008. This showed significant improvement over the previous national test results. While all pupils reached the expected standards for their age, fewer than expected nationally reached the higher Level 3 in writing. Standards at the end of Year 6 were average overall, showing a

decline since the previous year. Again the proportion reaching the higher level in English, due to writing standards, was short of the national expectation. From starting in Reception to leaving Year 6 achievement is satisfactory. Progress over time has been patchy due in part to a particularly unsettled period of staffing in recent years which is now resolved. The school has raised its expectations, especially of the more able pupils, and there are indications of higher standards in the current Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress overall in relation to their starting points, as a result of detailed and highly effective tracking of their individual progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils enjoy school immensely because there are so many things for them to do. Relationships with other pupils and adults are excellent. Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils are invariably polite and well mannered and very mindful of one another. Attendance is well above average and pupils arrive in school on time. Pupils feel safe because of their trusting relationships and knowing how to protect themselves from potentially harmful situations. They are proud of their Healthy Schools award. Their organic vegetable plot which parents help them to run complements their excellent understanding of what it means to eat sensibly. Their attendance at after-school sports clubs fully justifies the school's Activemark. Pupils make a strong contribution to their school and local communities. The school council makes sure that all views are considered when discussing improvements. Others carry out important jobs, for example as road safety officers or caring for infant children in the playground. Initiatives such as bulb planting in the local park and charity fundraising for developments overseas, help pupils gain a good sense of belonging to a community. Pupils make good progress towards acquiring some of the skills needed for the workplace. Strengthening links with the high school help to give pupils the confidence they need to face new challenges in the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Professional development combined with regular monitoring and support is having a positive impact, for example in teachers' use of electronic whiteboards to lift the pace and interest of lessons. Good relationships generate a good climate and positive attitude to learning. Lessons are planned satisfactorily, though routine use of computers as a tool for learning is not always planned or seen in practice. Teachers take account of pupils' different abilities when planning, but in some lessons the tasks are not sufficiently matched to individual pupils' needs because the use of day-to-day assessments to guide planning is not embedded. As a result, work is sometimes too challenging or not challenging enough. Teaching assistants are valued members of the teaching team. They work sensitively with groups and individual pupils and some of their teaching, such as when working with pupils who have specific additional needs, is of an outstanding quality.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum enables pupils to achieve satisfactorily. There has been satisfactory progress in the provision for information and communication technology since the last inspection. A

whole-school project to boost writing skills has got off to a promising start. Teachers are beginning to plan ways for pupils to practise writing skills and link ideas across a range of subjects to make learning more meaningful. Curriculum enrichment is an outstanding feature of the curriculum. Parents and pupils confirm the significant progress made in providing pupils with opportunities to foster and develop their particular skills and interests through sports and other activities, including residential visits. A French club has provided solid groundwork for the introduction of the language to the curriculum. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education and citizenship is satisfactory. Outside agencies are used effectively to raise pupils' awareness of the potential dangers of drugs and other substances and there is a programme to help pupils deal with social and emotional development. School leaders are aware of the need to review the provision for sex and relationships education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents typically comment that they are more than happy with the way their children are cared for in school. Pupils fully endorse that view. They say they feel safe because there are rules and everyone sticks to them. Guidance about personal conduct and relationships is excellent and results in pupils' outstanding personal development. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet requirements. Risk assessments and essential safety checks are robust. The school provides exceptional support for its most vulnerable pupils to ensure that their particular needs are met and that they achieve well in a safe and supportive environment. Systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress throughout the year are satisfactory. Individual guidance given through marking is improving but the best practice is not yet consistent throughout the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has established a firm platform for further improvement. He has gained the confidence and support of parents who, with the school, share the vision for its future success. Management roles are developing. Governors are more self-evaluative and have already formulated an action plan to help them keep track of the school's performance and rate of improvement so they are better placed to challenge more rigorously. Staff development, linked to school priorities, is beginning to have an impact on standards and the effectiveness of teaching but subject leaders and senior managers are not sufficiently accountable for driving through developments in particular areas. Leaders have identified the need to raise their expectations and have set more challenging targets accordingly. They have effectively maintained the quality of care and promote equality well. There are good links with the local community through the church and other local groups but the wider development of community cohesion is satisfactory. Although actions are planned, and some headway has been made involving pupils in global issues, it is not an integral part of curriculum planning.

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?	3
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?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
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	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?	1
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	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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	2

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?	3
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?	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

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

Thank you very much for making me so welcome when I came to inspect your school recently. It was a pleasure to spend some time talking to you and looking at your work because you were always so polite and well mannered. I also noticed that your behaviour is excellent and that you take really good care of each other. Well done for keeping your attendance well above average. You must be extremely healthy, but that's hardly surprising given those smashing school dinners you eat every day! All of those things are very important so do keep them up.

Although your school has some good and outstanding features, overall it is satisfactory. You make satisfactory progress and the standards you reach are broadly the same as those attained by pupils in most schools. The grown-ups in your school take really good care of you and do their best to help you enjoy your learning and achieve as well as you can.

Your parents, school governors, teachers and everyone who works so hard in St Gregory's love your school as much as you do and want your school to be better. I know that you would like that too so I have asked your school leaders to improve four things. First, I have asked them to help all of you to reach higher standards in your writing. Second, I have asked that teachers try to make all of your lessons really great fun and as good as the very best. The third thing I have asked is that your teachers give you more help to assess your own progress and decide on your own targets. Finally, I have asked if subject leaders can plan exciting ways to improve your learning in all subjects and check that their plans really work. Of course, you have a part to play too. You must continue to be as well behaved and enjoy school as much as you do now and do your work to the best of your ability.