

St Gregory's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122038
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	334193
Inspection dates	30 June –1 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Hazel Callaghan

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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)	373
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	48
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Berni Behan
Headteacher	Eamonn Mcmorrow
Date of previous school inspection	11 March 2008
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Grange Road Northampton NN3 2BD
Telephone number	01604 403511

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	30 June –1 July 2009
Inspection number	334193

Fax number

01604 403606

Age group	4-11
Inspection dates	30 June -1 July 2009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

St Gregory's is a large Catholic primary school that takes its pupils from the local area and from across the local parish. Most of the pupils are from White British backgrounds but there is larger than usual number of pupils from a wide range of minority ethnic groups who speak a variety of home languages. More pupils are learning English as an additional language than is usual in most schools and this is increasing. More pupils move into the school than is found nationally especially in the older classes. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average as is the proportion of pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Early years education is provided for children between the ages of three and five in the onsite Nursery which is managed by the school governors and by the two Reception classes. The school was identified as requiring special measures at the previous inspection in March 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. St Gregory's provides a satisfactory education for its pupils but is improving rapidly. The reason for the school's rapid improvement is the strong focus of the senior leadership team on driving up standards and the commitment of all staff to school improvement. As one governor put it, 'There is now a culture of self-evaluation and analysis throughout the school that is moving it forward.' Parents and pupils also recognise the many improvements.

Pupils' attainment in Year 6 has improved significantly this year, especially in the last term, and gaps in pupils' learning have been addressed as a result of well focused teaching. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards of Level 5 has increased in both English and mathematics and standards in science are significantly higher than in 2006 and 2007. However, although standards have risen and progress recently has been strong, this has not yet fully compensated for the inadequate learning in the past. Consequently, achievement overall is satisfactory and standards in Year 6 are now in line with the national average.

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are provided with an exciting learning environment that stimulates their interest and desire to learn and, as a result, children make good progress. Their progress in developing expected language skills is particularly impressive, especially for those new to learning English. Good progress continues in Years 1 and 2, but remains satisfactory overall in Years 3, 4 and 5. Teaching has improved in these classes and is often good, but it is not yet consistently so and this slows pupils' overall progress. The school has made good progress in sharing teaching strategies that support pupils' understanding of what pupils are to learn and that give them a good understanding of what is expected in each lesson. Where assessment is used well to clearly identify the next steps in learning for each child, and lessons are well structured, learning moves along at a good pace, but this is not a secure process in Years 3, 4 and 5. Writing remains a whole school weakness because pupils' progress is slower and fewer pupils are reaching the standards expected for their age than in reading, mathematics or science.

Pupils enjoy their learning. One pupil's comment was typical of many when he said that 'teachers are fun'. Lots agreed that they think their activities are interesting. This is largely due to the good range of additional activities, such as a 'Science Week' and the 'Writing Day' which were held across the school which extend pupils' interest, challenge their thinking and enrich their experiences. The curriculum is satisfactorily adapted to meet the learning needs of different abilities. Those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or in early stages of learning English are well supported so they take a full part. Opportunities to use pupils' English skills are developed in other subjects, but these are not yet planned effectively enough to provide more reasons for pupils to want to write.

The school's strong Catholic ethos underpins all its work and pupils feel well cared for and supported. One pupil commented, 'We have a great staff, they help us if we are hurt or sad.' Pupils enjoy being part of their 'big family', relishing the many cultures and backgrounds represented. They show great care, empathy and interest in each other. The recent 'Culture Show' was the brainchild of one of the pupils and was a great success as it celebrated the many cultures within the school population. Pupils now have a much greater say in how the life of the school can be improved and take this responsibility willingly and reliably. Pupils' spiritual,

social, moral and cultural development is now excellent and one of the many aspects of the school that has improved. Good strides have been made in school self-evaluation especially when focusing on those areas which were of most concern in the last report. Staff are now beginning to broaden this view to encompass all areas of the school's work so that judgements on strengths and areas for improvement are more accurate in all areas. The school is well supported by the strong governing body who continues to challenge the staff and the school's effectiveness. This and the good leadership of the senior leadership team provide the school with a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Nursery and the Reception classes provide an outstanding, lively and stimulating learning environment. Children's interests are understood and used to inspire children's desire to find out more, to experiment and explore. The classrooms and the outside areas are equally interesting and fun places to be. Adults provide excellent support, use questions and a wide range of resources to help children's learning move forward. Thorough assessments of children's work and progress are used to identify next steps. In both settings children are encouraged to plan activities for themselves, to organise their own resources and so develop their independent learning skills. Relationships are very good. Children are very well cared for and feel safe and confident in their own abilities. They concentrate for good lengths of time. Children of all abilities make at least good progress. Those in the early stages of learning English settle quickly and absorb new vocabulary and understanding effectively. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and also grow in confidence as their learning progresses. The staff of the Nursery and Reception classes work closely together. Induction into the school is well managed and links with parents ensure that staff have good understanding of children's needs when they start. Leadership and management are excellent. The manager of the Nursery and the Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator actively look for ways to improve the provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop strategies that effectively promote pupils' good writing skills in all areas of their work so standards rise.
- Ensure teaching is consistently good by making more effective use of assessment to identify the next steps in learning and provide activities that are well matched to pupils' abilities so pupils make good progress.

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

The range of skills and experiences of those children for whom English is their home language is similar to that found nationally, but almost a third of children starting in the Reception classes this year had very little English. This slowed their initial learning but they soon started to catch up. Good progress is made and a high proportion of children reach the standards expected at the end of Reception and many attain higher levels. Progress in Years 1 and 2 is good. In the past, judgements on pupils' attainment were not accurate and as assessments became more accurate standards appeared to decline. They have now been steady at broadly average for

three years. The inflated judgements in the past have caused difficulties in evaluating pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 until secure data was obtained. Poor teaching in the past in Years 3 and 4 resulted in pupils' inadequate progress, but this has been addressed. Pupils now achieve satisfactorily overall, but in the last term this has accelerated so that standards in Years 3, 4 5 and 6 have risen. The school recognises that too few pupils reach the standards expected for their age and this continues to be a focus for improvement especially in writing. A large number of pupils enter the school in Key Stage 2, many with little English which impacts adversely on the school's standards. Good support strategies are employed to help these pupils to succeed and this year a good number have reached the expected levels. The progress of pupils of all ethnic groups is monitored and currently there are no significant differences in their achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are caring, polite and supportive of each other. Pupils in Year 6 show very mature attitudes. They have a good understanding about what constitutes a healthy diet but do not always make positive choices. They enjoy sport and games but there are very few opportunities as yet for them to make positive choices about taking exercise because there are limited after school sports clubs. Pupils recognise that there are dangers in the world around them and show a good understanding of how to keep safe. Pupils enjoy school and the vast majority attend very regularly. Attendance has declined a little because a small group of pupils are not good attenders and the school is working with the education welfare office to encourage better attendance. Behaviour is good. In classes it is often very good and only begins to slip a little if the activity becomes less interesting or challenging. Pupils contribute to the life of the school and to the parish and respond well to opportunities to raise money for worldwide charities. They are developing good interpersonal skills and average basic skills which ensure they are satisfactorily prepared for their next stage of learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall, but it is often good and there is outstanding teaching in some areas of the school. Pupils' learning is not yet sufficiently strong to ensure pupils reach the standards of which they are capable and this is due to the inconsistencies of teaching in some age groups. All teachers use positive strategies that support pupils' understanding of what pupils are to learn and give them a good understanding of what is expected in each lesson. Assessment is used well by some teachers to clearly identify the next steps in learning for each child and this ensures activities build on prior learning effectively. Effective lessons are well structured so the process of learning new skills and ideas is presented in a logical fashion which ensures that learning moves along at a good pace. This is not always the case. The matching of activities to pupils' learning needs is not as rigorous as it could be in some lessons and some pupils are not sufficiently challenged so progress becomes satisfactory rather than good. Pupils appreciate the 'three stars and a wish' marking procedures used by teachers, feeling it supports their good progress. This system of marking is evident throughout the school but there are inconsistencies in some classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is now suitably broad and well balanced. The personal, social and health education aspect of the curriculum is strong and promotes pupils' social, moral and cultural development very well. Subjects are increasingly linked so that activities are more meaningful. Pupils' literacy skills are well used in other subjects to record pupils' learning and to explore new ideas. However, pupils have too few opportunities to write at length for a specific purpose across other subjects, which slow their progress. A strength of the curriculum is the many additional activities, theme days, visits and visitors which bring learning alive. The curriculum is adapted satisfactorily to meet pupils' differing needs. Good support is given to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those new to learning English so they can access the curriculum. More able pupils are better challenged, but less is planned to support or challenge the gifted and talented pupils. There is a very small number of after school clubs and activities for a school of this size and this limits the opportunities for pupils to reinforce learning in a more informal atmosphere.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The personal and pastoral care of pupils provided by staff is good. Relationships are strong and pupils say they feel safe and well cared for. Safeguarding procedures are effectively carried out and at the time of the inspection ensured pupils' safety well. Staff are effective in managing any inappropriate behaviour, but usually staff high expectations and good relationships mean there are few such occasions. Parents recognise the way the staff care for the pupils in their care. Some of the comments made by parents spoken to were, 'I'm happy because I know that staff are really concerned about my children', 'teachers are very accessible and a great support', and several commented on how children are 'always at the forefront' of the school's work. The school satisfactorily monitors absence and works with parents if there are difficulties. Academic support and guidance are good. Comprehensive data is collected to monitor pupils' progress. Information is used well to identify those who need additional support and to track the needs of individual pupils. Pupils know how well they are doing and are given targets for improvement that they understand.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The senior leadership team works as a very effective team in leading school improvement, in raising standards and ensuring pupils' care and support. Good progress has been made in developing systems for evaluating pupils' progress and assessing the impact of strategies for improvement. The staff challenge each other in their evaluations and discussions are lively and effective. Termly progress meetings reflect on pupils' achievement and interventions are planned so pupils improve. The school has yet to complete an up to date whole-school evaluation of its provision so that strengths and weakness are identified. Links with outside agencies, especially the local authority, have supported school improvement and given support to pupils and staff. Partnerships with parents are good but the headteacher and governors recognised that communication could be stronger after reading the responses of parents in a recent questionnaire. The school has recently made an audit of its work in promoting community cohesion. It was surprised to find how much they did within the school's diverse community,

the local community and parish, but has also identified areas where more can be achieved by developing links in the wider community and worldwide.

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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?	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	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
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

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
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?	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	2
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	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

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

3 July 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of St Gregory's Catholic Primary, Northampton NN3 2BD.

- Thank you for making us so welcome and answering our questions when we visited you recently. We could see you are proud of your school and what it does for you. You and your parents are correct in thinking that the school has made many improvements recently and is steadily improving. Here are some of the things we found out.
- St Gregory's has made lots of progress, particularly in the last two terms. This is due to the strong leadership of your senior teachers and the hard work of all the staff.
- The children in the Nursery and Reception have a superb environment in which to learn and develop.
- You are beginning to make good progress in your work and many of you now reach standards that are expected by the time you leave in Year 6.
- You behave well and get on with each other successfully. You are polite, friendly and helpful to everyone. You think it's great that there are so many children from different backgrounds in the school and I hear your Culture Show was a great success.
- You work hard in lessons and enjoy your activities, especially the theme days and visits. Many of you and your parents would like more after school clubs.
- All the staff look after you very well so you feel safe and are happy.

Even though St Gregory's has made many improvements, there are some things that can be even better. We have particularly asked the headteacher and governors to do these things.

- Help you to make better progress in your writing so standards continue to rise.
- Make sure that activities in all lessons are really effective in moving you on in your learning at a good rate. Thank you again for helping us with our questions and making our visit to your school so pleasurable.

Yours faithfully

Hazel Callaghan Lead inspector