

# St Gerard's Roman Catholic Primary and Nursery School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111391
<b>Local Authority</b>	Halton
<b>Inspection number</b>	337676
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 April 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jennifer Platt

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	202
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr P Finney
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Roger Harrison
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 November 2006
<b>School address</b>	Lugsdale Road Widnes Cheshire WA8 6DD
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 4242879
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons and observed all seven teachers. Meetings were held with staff, governors and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including policies relating to the safeguarding of pupils, the school's development plan, self-evaluation and pupil progress monitoring records. In addition, inspectors analysed 108 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 22 from school staff and 90 from pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the quality of teaching and the progress of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the progress pupils make in writing throughout the school
- current attendance and the school's systems to ensure pupils attend regularly
- the clarity of the school's priorities to raise standards.

## Information about the school

The school is smaller than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The school's intake is predominantly White British and few pupils are from minority ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The school has a small number of Traveller learners. A considerable number of pupils start and leave school at different times during the school year. The school holds several awards including Artsmark (Gold), the Healthy Schools award and Activemark.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

This is a good school. Care for pupils is outstanding and this is one of the main reasons pupils are happy and parents and carers are content with the education their children receive. Pupils feel extremely safe and have an excellent understanding about how to keep themselves healthy. The school's ethos promotes pupils' spirituality and self-esteem effectively. It is a delight to see the pupils' pleasure in being in school and they talk enthusiastically about the many friendships they make. They are polite and welcoming to visitors. Behaviour is exemplary, especially for the older pupils.

Pupils' achievement is good. Many children start school with low levels of skill and make good progress to reach the level expected for their age. Science and mathematics are stronger subjects than English and, in 2009, test results were slightly above average overall. Writing is the weakness in English and, although standards are rising, few pupils exceed the level expected for their age. The school's improved monitoring of pupils' progress is identifying the more-able pupils, although this information is not always being used effectively to challenge them to reach higher standards, especially in writing.

Effective teaching is a major contribution to pupils' good progress. Lessons are lively, proceed at a good pace and capture pupils' interest. The new, more creative curriculum is making learning more interesting and extending pupils' imaginative vocabulary. As yet, not every opportunity to extend writing is being fully exploited. Pupils appreciate greatly the wide and rich experiences offered, especially in sport. Excellent partnerships with other agencies play a part in the wide range of activities. Inspectors felt privileged to hear a whole class playing violins.

The enthusiastic headteacher is respected by all involved with the school. His determination to provide the best care and the richness of activities ensures the pupils' time in school is a memorable experience. He has developed the senior management team well and is extending the monitoring roles of governors and subject leaders so that they are more involved in setting priorities. Although the school's development plan is a long document, it does include the correct priorities and actions to raise standards. It is based on an honest self-evaluation of performance, which is mainly accurate, and is effectively moving the school forward. The school, therefore, has good capacity to improve further.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing by:
  - using consistently the new progress monitoring data to identify and support

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pupils, especially those who are more able, who are not making the expected progress

- exploiting every opportunity to use writing in all subjects
- making more use of pupils' targets and linking them to the current style of writing being taught.

■ Extend the leadership role of governors and subject leaders by:

- increasing their opportunities to monitor school performance
- refine the school's development plan so that is easier to identify success.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Pupils enjoy learning. The depth of concentration to read music in a violin lesson is mirrored in other activities. Pupils are inquisitive and eager to discover things for themselves. For example, close collaboration in science contributes to pupils' skills in following their own line of enquiry. It is not surprising progress is good. Overall, pupils reach the levels expected for their age by the time they leave the school. The results of national tests are broadly average at the end of both key stages, with a rising trend in Key Stage 2. An offshoot of the focus on speaking and listening skills is pupils' growing confidence to write more imaginatively. Standards in writing are rising but pupils' progress in writing is not as rapid as in other subjects and few pupils reach above-average standards, especially at the end of Key Stage 1. Traveller learners and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported effectively with work closely matching their needs. Consequently, their achievement and progress are in line with their peers.

Consideration for others and an eagerness to join in all that is on offer underpin pupils' learning and progress. They are proud of their school and eager to talk about its many strengths. Clearly, they enjoy physical activity, of which there is high take up, and recognise the importance of a healthy diet. They are doing well because their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils show respect for each other and for adults. Pupils' understanding of life in a multicultural society was increased through several links abroad and involvement with Libyan families new to the local area. The school intends to build on this experience. Attendance is average. The majority attend regularly and the school exceeds the target set by the local authority. Pupils are well prepared for the future and have particularly strong skills in information and communication technology.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

There are many strengths in teaching, particularly in relation to behaviour management. Lessons are organised well. Adults understand their responsibilities and make an effective contribution to their pupils' learning. Numeracy and science lessons, especially, include a variety of strategies and practical activities. The level of challenge was high in a Year 6 numeracy lesson, for example, as pupils applied their skills to calculating areas and perimeters. The work in pupils' literacy books is not always as challenging, especially when worksheets are used. The best marking seen tells pupils how to improve and reminds them of their individual targets. However, in writing, pupils are not always clear about how to produce better writing.

Displays show good attention to creative, physical and academic development. Personal and social development is also a priority and results in a harmonious community. New links between subjects are being developed to make learning more purposeful and increase enjoyment. The pupils enjoy thoroughly the wide range of extra activities and the number of visits. Residential visits for older pupils are the highlight of the school year for many. The needs of the lower-attaining groups are met very well, especially in the small nurture groups, which allow these pupils to learn at their own pace.

The school places great emphasis on treating pupils as individuals and this is reflected in the outstandingly effective support for pupils needing additional support. Newcomers find a warm, nurturing welcome that meets their often-complex needs. The promotion of good attendance through incentives and external support for pupils and their families is improving attendance effectively. The breakfast club is inviting and friendly and provides a good start to the day for those who attend.

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*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher leads the way in driving ambition and has established a shared sense of purpose to raise aspirations and attainment in school. Recent improvement to the monitoring of pupils' progress is enabling staff to identify achievement more effectively. Termly progress meetings are making staff more accountable for the progress pupils make in their classes. The school's development plan identifies the correct priorities but success is not always easy to measure. It identifies correctly the need to raise the monitoring role of subject leaders. Supportive governors give close attention to managing the budget. Governors are extending their links with individual classes so that they can play a more effective role in making decisions and challenging the leadership in order to set accurate priorities for development.

Equality of opportunity is good. The school ensures that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, Traveller pupils and others needing additional support have full access to all that is on offer. The school is now placing more emphasis on the needs of the more able. Success is more evident in the rising standards in mathematics and science than in writing.

The school promotes community cohesion within the school community and the local community well. Pupils respect other beliefs and traditions and the school is now expanding links beyond its immediate environs to extend pupils' understanding of cultures which are different to their own.

All staff are trained in child protection and are checked for their suitability to work with children of this age. Increased security procedures and close supervision ensure pupils play safely. Thorough and effective attention is given to teaching pupils how to keep themselves safe. Indeed, safeguarding procedures are good.

Very good links with parents and carers lead to them being very supportive of school. However, a few do not take up the opportunities to be actively engaged in their children's learning. Excellent links with other agencies, including schools, the local authority and sporting clubs, extend the opportunities offered to pupils. The school also shares its skills and expertise with other schools.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

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<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Accommodation for the Early Years Foundation Stage has been refurbished and Nursery and Reception children are taught in a single unit. This merger is fully exploited so that all have full access to the outdoors and to a wide range of resources. Effective teaching enables children to make good progress from levels of skills on entry that, for many children, are much lower than age-related expectations, especially in social and communication skills. Despite this good progress, attainment is below average when they enter Year 1.

Children settle happily and enjoy their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The daily routine is carefully established so that children know what to expect and feel safe. They approach staff happily when they have any concerns. All staff know the needs of this age group and know when to offer help and when to encourage independence. The outdoor area is used well and children enjoy practical games that effectively extend their knowledge of numbers. Stories play an important part in daily life and children follow the examples set by adults and can be seen sitting, sharing a favourite story.

Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Ongoing observations are recorded and transferred to individual records so that progress is carefully monitored. Individual profiles of progress are in place but, as yet, parents and carers are not fully contributing to these records. The action plan drawn up by the senior leadership has successfully improved provision. A new system to assess attainment on entry is ready to be put in place although as yet not enough attention is given to analysing data to identify current priorities.



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*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

A large proportion of parents and carers returned the questionnaires sent out before the inspection. Virtually every parent and carer indicated positive views and added comments to support their opinions. They are very pleased about the care their children receive and inspectors support these views.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Gerard's Roman Catholic Primary and Nursery School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 108 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 202 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	78	72	30	28	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	92	85	16	15	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	79	73	26	24	3	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	78	72	29	27	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	86	80	22	20	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	75	69	31	29	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	72	67	35	32	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	77	71	27	25	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	75	69	31	29	1	1	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	74	69	32	30	1	1	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	68	63	36	33	1	1	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	76	70	29	27	1	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	86	80	20	19	1	1	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



30 April 2010

Dear Pupils

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Gerard's Roman Catholic Primary and Nursery School, Widnes, WA8 6DD

Thank you for the caring and kind welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school. We appreciated your help especially when we got lost! We were pleased to find out that you have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and healthy. You go to a very caring school and your staff make every effort to help and advise you. It was a delight to hear your violin playing - you certainly give close attention to your teacher. We saw the same effort in many of your lessons and this enables you to make good progress. You contribute to this by your excellent behaviour, especially by the older pupils, in lessons.

To help your school become even better, we have asked your headteacher and governors to:

- help you to improve your writing, by telling you how to make it better and by giving you more chances to write in other subjects
- make sure the school governors and your teachers who manage different areas monitor more closely what is happening in school.

You can help by continuing with all of your hard work and regular attendance. We are sure you will all have some wonderful memories of the exciting experiences you have had at school. We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Jennie Platt

Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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