

St Gerard's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111706
Local Authority	Middlesbrough
Inspection number	337726
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2010
Reporting inspector	David Shearsmith

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	151
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gamini Wijesinghe
Headteacher	Mr Ian Walker
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. There were 14 lessons observed and meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at the self-evaluation documentation, monitoring and assessment information, lesson plans and school policies. They also analysed 25 parental, 45 pupil and 3 staff questionnaires. The school's safeguarding procedures were also evaluated.

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

- how well the school has improved standards in writing
- how well the school has developed its curriculum to improve standards in writing
- the consistency in the quality of teaching and learning
- how well leaders at all levels have engaged in self-evaluation and future priorities
- the identification of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in Key Stage 1.

Information about the school

St Gerard's is a smaller than average size school. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The number of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average and increasing. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. Since the last inspection, the school has gained Healthy Schools status, the Eco Schools Award, Artsmark Gold, Activemark and Sportsmark.

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

St Gerard's is a good school. The effective provision for the youngest children in the Early Years Foundation Stage provides them with a happy, secure and exciting learning environment that ensures that they are given an effective and interesting start to their formal education. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school and some praise it highly.

Pupils begin school from low starting points. All staff ensure that pupils do well and make good progress. The progress of all pupils is tracked carefully. This means that all groups of pupils are well provided for in lessons to reach broadly average standards by the end of Key Stage 2.

Teaching, learning and assessment are good overall. Pupils know about their targets for improvement and are given further help through good quality marking. Teachers know their pupils well and plan well structured activities to ensure they make good progress. The curriculum is no better than satisfactory overall because it fails to provide sufficient opportunities to link subjects together to make learning more meaningful to pupils. There are also insufficient opportunities for pupils to use their basic skills, including information and communication technology skills (ICT), in realistic contexts in order to accelerate their progress.

The school provides good care and support for pupils. As a result, they are keen and enthusiastic, considerate and well behaved. They enjoy their learning, and have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and keep safe. They take on responsibilities, for example as school councillors proposing improvements to the school grounds.

The recently appointed headteacher has already demonstrated a clear purpose and vision for the school's improvement. High expectations and a strong belief in the expertise and commitment of staff have started to drive improvements, although further work is needed to strengthen curriculum leadership. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation have helped to improve the quality of teaching, which is having a positive impact on pupils' progress and standards. The school's self-evaluation is mainly accurate, if somewhat cautious. Governors are very supportive and know the school well. They visit the school and monitor the quality of provision regularly and are keen for it to improve further. This, together with what has already been achieved, indicates a good capacity for improvement in the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- For curriculum leaders to improve the school's curriculum and to accelerate pupils'

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progress, by:

- using ICT more effectively in order to accelerate pupils' learning
- providing more opportunities for pupils to use their basic skills in contexts relevant to their own experiences
- linking subjects together more closely so that pupils can apply their basic skills more effectively across the curriculum.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' learning and progress in lessons are generally good. Pupils behave well, and are mature, polite, thoughtful and considerate young people. Most pupils are enthusiastic about their tasks and respond well to lessons. In Year 2, for example, a group of pupils thoroughly enjoyed their work in literacy using the interactive whiteboard to explore characterisation. In good lessons in Years 5 and 6, pupils responded well to their writing tasks, as well as to some challenging work in mathematics about area, due to some outstanding teaching and the teacher's good subject knowledge in the basic skills.

In the 2009 Year 6 national tests pupils performed well. However, girls outperformed boys in all areas, but especially in writing. Overall, pupils make good progress and their achievement is good. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do as well as their peers because of the good care and support they receive.

Pupils get on extremely well together and willingly take on responsibilities around the school. They know how to keep safe, eat healthily and clearly understand environmental issues through the school's Eco work. They are proud to be school council members and make a good contribution to the life of the school. Although pupils are aware of the world of work, their basic skills are no better than satisfactory, particularly in ICT and writing. Pupils' attendance is average. Their spiritual, moral and social development is strong and they readily participate in prayers in assemblies.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2

¹ 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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Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is mostly good and ranges from satisfactory to occasionally outstanding. Skilful management of pupils' behaviour, together with the use of well deserved praise, builds pupils' confidence as learners. Most lessons are very well planned. A variety of activities that pupils enjoy ensures a good pace to most lessons and builds up learning step by step. Interactive whiteboards are not used sufficiently well to involve pupils in learning. Teachers know their pupils very well. They effectively use assessment information to ensure that gaps in knowledge and understanding are filled and that tasks match pupils' different needs. Teachers share lesson objectives with pupils to help them understand the purpose of a lesson and to know what is expected of them. As a result, pupils are generally challenged by the tasks devised for them.

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. It does, however, include good opportunities for pupils to develop personal skills and to pursue safe and healthy lifestyles. This is reflected in the school's Healthy Schools Award and pupils' interest in sporting activities. Pupils take part in a wide range of activities outside school that contribute to their good progress. There are, however, insufficient opportunities to develop pupils' basic skills. The school recognises this and plans to re-vamp the curriculum to establish closer links between subjects and to better promote pupils' basic skills. The school is also aware of the need to further develop ICT as a tool for enhancing learning and improving pupils' basic skills.

St Gerard's is a very caring school that places great importance on developing pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Pupils say they feel safe and well cared for. Adults know pupils well and respond positively to their needs. Pupils know that if they have a problem there is always someone there to help them. The most vulnerable pupils benefit greatly from the good work the school carries out with external agencies. The school provides a wide range of support to enable these pupils to play a full part in school life and to make good progress as the result of effective intervention strategies. The school now has better procedures for identifying pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in Key Stage 1, who are now making good progress. Pupils benefit from good induction procedures and transition throughout the school and as a result they settle quickly and make good progress.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

All leaders and managers are committed to school improvement and this is reflected in the governors' close involvement in many school activities and the readiness of teachers and others to improve their own practice. The new headteacher has a clear view of how to improve the school and has identified key priorities. Recently introduced assessment procedures include rigorous tracking systems to evaluate and support pupils' progress. These are used well to help ensure all pupils have every opportunity. Any possible discrimination is addressed effectively. For example, the school recognised boys' past underachievement in writing and has rightly focused on improving writing across the school as a means of successfully raising their achievement in this subject.

Strong links with parents and carers are maintained through parents' evenings, newsletters and also in the playground at the start and finish of each day. The school has carefully analysed its good links within the school and its local community. It is aware that it needs to extend links nationally and globally and is in the process of developing these aspects further. There are strong partnerships with the church and other schools that promote pupils' learning. Pupils' outcomes are good, both academic and personal, and this indicates that the school gives good value for money. Satisfactory safeguarding procedures are helping create a safe and secure school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes. They settle in quickly and are keen to learn. Children play together and are very well behaved. They enjoy learning in this busy environment, particularly in the Nursery. When they enter the Early Years Foundation Stage, children's attainment is typically below that expected for their age. By the end of Reception, they attain levels that are close to those expected for their age. They make the most gains in their personal skills and this was demonstrated when, for example, the children cooperate with each other to clear up. They also take responsibility for other tasks in the Nursery.

Children enjoy a wide range of stimulating activities, indoors and out, which are carefully chosen to meet their needs and interests. They are also given the opportunity to select their own learning activities and respond well to encouragement and praise to explore and widen their choices, particularly in the Nursery class. Teaching is mainly good, with lessons that motivate children in a friendly and safe atmosphere.

Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is currently shared, ensuring good practice is developing in both classes. This collaboration is helping to establish an Early Years Foundation Stage unit. Good care and welfare are provided for children to ensure their well-being. Teachers and helpers are highly perceptive, note down significant moments of each child's progress and make good use of the 'daily diary' to communicate with parents and carers. These records are used well to ensure that each child's learning is moved forward.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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

The school enjoys the support of the overwhelming majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires. Almost all respondents were very positive about the school and felt that it keeps pupils safe and helps them to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Inspectors agree with 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 RC Primary 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 25 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 151 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	84	4	16	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	23	92	2	8	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	72	7	28	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	72	7	28	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	20	80	5	20	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	68	7	28	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	84	4	16	0	0	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)	17	68	8	32	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	68	7	28	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	64	6	24	3	12	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	68	6	24	1	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	18	72	6	24	0	0	1	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	18	72	6	24	1	4	0	0

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	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). 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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



19 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Gerard's RC Primary School, Middlesbrough, TS8 9HU

I am writing to thank you all for making us so welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. We did enjoy our visit and think that yours is a good school and we agree with what you told us. Here is a list of some of the things that we think are good.

- You all make good progress in your learning.
- You behave well, get along with each other and feel safe in school.
- You have a good understanding of how to live healthily.
- You find lessons interesting and really enjoy school.
- There are plenty of exciting things for you to do both in school and in clubs.
- The headteacher and staff manage the school well.

Even good schools can get better. We have asked your headteacher and staff to look at a few ways of making improvements. We have asked them to improve the school's curriculum so that it helps you make even better progress by:

- using ICT more effectively to accelerate your learning
- providing more opportunities for you to use basic skills for real life tasks
- linking subjects together so that you can improve your basic skills in all your subjects.

Yours sincerely

Mr David Shearsmith

Lead inspector

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