

The Catholic School of Saint Gregory the Great

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115731
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	338651
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Susan Walsh

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	386
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nicky Febery
Headteacher	Sharon Aston
Date of previous school inspection	15 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 18 lessons and observed 14 teachers. Meetings were held with staff, governors and pupils. Inspectors reviewed the school's work and looked at the school's development plans, minutes of the governing body's meetings, the school's records of pupils' progress, samples of pupils' work in English, mathematics and science, and 147 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team looked in detail at the following:

- pupils' progress in Key Stage 2, looking particularly at the progress of more-able pupils in English, and pupils of average ability and those who are more-able in mathematics and science
- the amount of challenge in lessons and the match of work to pupils' needs
- the use of academic targets and the quality of teachers' marking
- the contribution of subject coordinators and middle leaders to embedding ambition and driving up standards

Information about the school

The school is much larger than most primary schools and takes pupils from a wide catchment area. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average, with a significant number of pupils having Polish backgrounds and an increasing number learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is rising and is now above average. The school has been awarded Activemark, has a Healthy School award, and the intermediate International Award. The school provides for the Early Years Foundation Stage through two Reception classes. Other provision on site, for the Early Years Foundation Stage, is managed through an independent Catholic Trust and will be inspected separately.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the progress pupils make in writing, mathematics and science and the quality of teaching in Key Stage 2.

Although outcomes are inadequate because pupils' academic achievement is not good enough, the school has many strengths. It provides a warm and welcoming environment where pupils feel very safe. They are confident that they can approach adults with any problems and that they will be helped and supported. Relationships are very good and pupils grow in confidence and maturity as they move through the school. Consequently, behaviour is good and pupils are extremely polite and well mannered. The strong Catholic ethos of the school ensures that pupils' awareness of and sensitivity to the world around them is well developed. Links with the local neighbourhood and the wider world are strong and as a result pupils gain a thorough understanding of how people live their lives outside their own community.

Children get off to a good start in the Reception classes because they have lots of interesting things to do that stimulate their learning. They make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 1 but the progress of the more-able, and pupils of average ability slows considerably in Years 3 and 4. Although progress then improves, particularly in Year 6, it is very hard for pupils to catch up and as a result attainment is low at the end of Year 6. Overall, pupils' progress in writing, mathematics and science is too slow in Key Stage 2. However, there are signs of improvement, with more pupils now working at the expected and higher levels in writing in Year 6 and accelerating progress in mathematics. Although pupils have good interpersonal skills and attend school regularly, their future economic well-being is inadequate because they are not attaining well enough in their basic skills.

Teaching is inadequate overall because there is too much satisfactory and inadequate teaching, particularly in lower Key Stage 2. There is also some very exciting teaching that really motivates the pupils. In some lessons, explanations are unclear and the pace of learning is not fast enough. There are too many occasions where the work is not sufficiently challenging or well matched to pupils' needs. Some teachers use target setting well and ensure that marking tells pupils how to improve their work but this is not consistent and in some classes pupils do not receive adequate guidance. Despite good features such as, many enriching activities and the way pupils are encouraged to research subjects and to grow in independence, the curriculum is inadequate. This is

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particularly due to weaknesses in the provision for science, as insufficient checks are made to ensure that pupils in all year groups have access to a broad and balanced curriculum which includes sufficient science lessons.

The headteacher, other senior leaders and governors have high aspirations and want the best for each and every child. This is reflected in pupils' good personal development and the way pupils are well-cared-for. Their Self-evaluation is secure and they know precisely where improvements need to be made in order to achieve this goal. Careful checks are made on pupils' progress in English and mathematics but the school does not keep a close enough eye on their progress in science. A substantial effort has been made to improve the quality of teaching. This has included the provision of support and guidance for teachers as well as additional training from the local authority. Consequently, teaching is showing signs of improvement and standards are starting to rise, demonstrating the school's satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in writing, mathematics and science in Key Stage 2, particularly by:
 - ensuring consistently high expectations of the quality of pupils' writing and standards of presentation
 - making certain that activities planned in mathematics sets take account of pupils' individual abilities
 - developing a secure science curriculum for all year groups
 - implementing a system that allows pupils' progress in science to be checked carefully.
- Improve the quality of teaching across all subjects in Key Stage 2 by:
 - providing clear explanations to pupils at the beginning of lessons so that they understand exactly what is required of them and they can make good progress when working independently
 - raising teachers' expectations and ensuring that all lessons have sufficient pace and challenge
 - providing work that is carefully matched to pupils' abilities
 - making more effective use of pupils' academic targets and consistently providing good quality marking so that pupils know exactly what to do to improve their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

Where teaching is good, pupils are very keen and eager to learn and they make good progress in these lessons. However, in too many lessons in lower Key Stage 2, the pace of learning is too slow, particularly when pupils are working independently. In these lessons pupils persevere and try their very best even when the teachers' explanations

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and expectations have been unclear. Although attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has been similar to the national average for a number of years, in 2009, attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 dipped in English, mathematics and science. This reflects weaknesses in the quality of teaching and the slow progress of pupils of average ability, and the more-able through Key Stage 2. Attainment is starting to improve in English with more pupils working at the higher levels in writing in Year 6. However, more needs to be done to improve pupils' progress in writing and the presentation of their work in Years 3 and 4. Although progress in mathematics is also improving, there are still pupils who struggle with basic calculations, problem solving and data analysis. Pupils say that they really enjoy the investigations in science but scrutiny of pupils' books revealed that some do not complete enough work in science, especially in Years 3, 4 and 5. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language make good improvements in their reading and writing because they have access to carefully targeted and well-delivered interventions that help them to progress well in these subjects. They make slower progress in mathematics.

Pupils enjoy working together and are extremely supportive of each other. They have a clear idea of right and wrong and a strong sense of justice, and as a result little bullying occurs. Empathy is developed and pupils are keen to support those who are less well off than themselves through involvement with charity fund-raising and Fair Trade events. Not only do pupils make a good contribution to their school, they also work hard to support the local community, for example through their involvement with the school choir and orchestra. Pupils are well aware of what they need to do to keep healthy and the very active school council is keen to promote healthy eating.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	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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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 Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Where good teaching occurs teachers have good subject knowledge which they share with pupils in a lively and imaginative way, but there is too much inadequate and satisfactory teaching in lower Key Stage 2. Although the majority of the weaker teaching is concentrated in Years 3 and 4, the quality of teaching is also inconsistent in Years 5 and 6. In the weaker lessons, expectations are often too low and there is insufficient pace and challenge. Pupils make better progress in the groups that are directly supported by teachers and teaching assistants, but teachers do not always check the progress of those pupils who are working independently. Work is often carefully matched to pupil's needs in Key Stage 1. However where pupils are taught in ability sets in mathematics in Key Stage 2, not enough attention is paid to using assessment data to meet the needs of pupils with different abilities within the set. In some lessons, good reference is made to pupils' academic targets and, when this is combined with good marking, pupils know exactly what to do to improve their work. However, opportunities are often missed to use targets to help pupils improve their work and some work is left unmarked.

The curriculum is good at supporting pupils' personal development, for example through religious education lessons, personal and social education lessons, and the creative curriculum. The development of an investigative approach has been especially successful in helping pupils to develop a wider understanding of many subject areas, such as 'space', and to feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for their learning. However, the curriculum in Years 3 and 4 is too narrow and these creative programmes are not being followed through. A greater focus on investigation is making science lessons more interesting but the major weakness in the curriculum is that too little science work is covered, particularly in Years 3, 4 and 5. Educational visits are used well to support learning; for example, a visit to The Black Country Museum stimulated some good quality writing in Year 6.

The high priority that is given to providing good quality pastoral care and supporting families is reflected in pupils' good personal development. Pupils know they are well looked after. Potentially vulnerable pupils, including those who are new to the school, are carefully nurtured. There is well-thought-out support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are at the early stages of learning English, and their academic progress and personal well-being are carefully monitored. A vigilant approach to checking pupils' attendance, together with the celebration of good attendance, is helping to boost attendance rates.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders and governors are exceptionally well motivated and are determined to communicate their ambition and drive improvement. The majority of staff are following their lead. The school is in the process of strengthening its senior leadership team and enhancing the way that subjects are led. There has been significant support from the local authority that has helped to develop the leadership and management of mathematics and work is starting on literacy. Weaknesses in the science curriculum reflect inconsistencies in the way the subject has been managed, although the leadership of science has recently been strengthened. Governors are very knowledgeable about the school and are determined to help drive forward improvements. They ensure that statutory duties are met and provide valuable challenge and support. Staff and governors work hard to ensure that pupils are safe and secure in school and safeguarding procedures are good. Stereotyping is frequently challenged and pupils are quick to express disapproval of racism and other forms of discrimination. The school has carefully tracked the performance of different groups of pupils and knows that more needs to be done to boost the progress of pupils of average ability and the more-able. It is tackling this by encouraging teachers to make better use of tracking information to set work that matches pupils' individual needs and by raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. Leaders are aware that that there is still some way to go on this. Promoting community cohesion is at the heart of the school's work. In addition to reaching out to the local community and working with a rural school, active partnerships with schools in Kenya and China enable pupils to develop a good understanding about how other children live.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2

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	
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

Until recently, children entered the Reception classes with average skills, but currently more children are starting school with skills in language, literacy and communication that are below those expected for their age. Children make good progress in the Reception classes and standards on entry to Year 1 are rising because of the good provision. A well-developed induction programme that eases children into their school work helps them to settle quickly. Children consistently have smiles on their faces because they are happily engaged in a good range of exciting and meaningful activities. For example, children were seen learning to subtract because they were fascinated by working out what the pirate Jack Sparrow might have on his lunch menu. Teachers work in a highly interactive way with children and as a result children rapidly gain confidence and feel valued in all that they do. Teachers are very skilfully supported by teaching assistants. Together, they work as an effective team throughout the day to ensure that all individuals are catered for and their welfare needs met. Leadership and management are strong and assessments are used well to plan work that moves children's learning on. Teachers rightly identify that more could be done to enhance links with nurseries on other sites.

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

Most parents are very happy with the quality of education provided by the school and comment on the positive ethos and the strong sense of community spirit. A small number of parents and carers wrote to inspectors to voice their concerns about their

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children's progress in Key Stage 2. Inspectors endorse their concerns and have asked the school to continue their work in accelerating pupils' progress in writing, mathematics and science.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Catholic School of St Gregory the Great 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 147 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 393 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	91	62	54	37	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	104	71	41	28	1	1	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	77	52	65	44	4	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	82	56	53	36	5	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	72	49	67	46	1	1	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	80	54	57	39	6	4	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	69	47	72	49	3	2	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)	65	44	69	47	5	3	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	71	48	62	42	6	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	71	48	67	46	7	5	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	57	39	79	54	4	3	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	81	55	52	35	5	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	85	58	54	37	5	3	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



18 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Catholic School of St Gregory the Great, Cheltenham. GL50 3QG

Thank you for being so friendly and polite when my colleagues and I visited your school. Although your school has been given a notice to improve, there are still many good things about it. This includes the way you are looked after and helped to become sensible and thoughtful young people. We were very pleased to see that you are sensitive to the feelings of others and how hard you try to help those who are less fortunate than yourselves. This helps to ensure that everyone feels safe in your school. We saw how hard you all try in lessons and admired your hard work and commitment. It's good that you all mix so well and that you understand how people live in different communities both in the United Kingdom and around the world.

Children get off to a good start in the Reception class and make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1. By the end of Year 6, you are reaching standards that are below those reached by other children in schools nationally. This is because you are not making good enough progress in Key Stage 2 in your writing, mathematics and science. We know you have some very interesting lessons and many of your teachers work very hard indeed, but in some classes, teaching is not good enough. In these lessons, teachers' explanations are not clear and lessons lack challenge, pace and excitement. You are sometimes set work that is too easy for you and occasionally it is too hard. We have asked your teachers to improve this. We noticed that teachers do not always tell you how to improve your work and we feel that targets could be used more effectively. You told us that you enjoy carrying out experiments in science but currently you are not completing enough science work and this is holding you back.

We know that the head, the staff and governors are working very hard to improve your school. Your attainment in writing is definitely improving and we saw some examples of very interesting writing in Year 6. You are also starting to do better in mathematics lessons. Inspectors will come back soon to check that your school is continuing to improve.

Thank you once again for being so helpful.

Yours sincerely

Susan Walsh

Lead inspector

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