

St Gregory's RC Primary School, Farnworth, Bolton

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105244
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	355737
Inspection dates	20–21 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Jim Kidd

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	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Ann Bates
Headteacher	Mr Gerry Maloney
Date of previous school inspection	27 November 2007
School address	Presto Street Farnworth Bolton BL4 8AJ
Telephone number	01204 332658
Fax number	01204 579663
Email address	office@st-gregorys.bolton.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	20–21 September 2010
Inspection number	355737

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 1234 234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 1234 234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 12 lessons and all nine teachers were observed at least once in their classrooms. Inspectors held meetings with pupils, staff and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work and looked at its development planning, reports from the local authority, internal and external documentation on pupils' progress and pupils' exercise books. Inspectors also scrutinised 58 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, 12 completed by staff and 101 returned by pupils in Key Stage 2.

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

- The progress pupils make in both key stages and whether progress in Key Stage 2 has risen.
- Whether improvements in attainment in Key Stage 2, suggested by data, are being maintained.
- How and with what impact the school is attempting to improve pupils' skills in writing.
- The consistency of teaching and whether assessment practice has improved.
- The impact on management of the relatively new leadership team.
- Whether children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have sufficient opportunities for independent learning.

Information about the school

This school is smaller than the average primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities fluctuates over time and is currently below that usually found. Most pupils are White British and there are few pupils at early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. St Gregory's has accredited Healthy Schools status, has Green Flag and also Fair Trade status and holds the gold awards in both Artsmark 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 rapidly improving school which provides a good quality of education for its pupils. They feel exceptionally safe and secure and have an outstanding awareness of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. Parents and carers are very supportive of what the school does for their children. 'Our children enjoy St Gregory's and benefit from the wide range of activities open to them,' was one comment.

Attainment has risen year on year since the previous inspection and is now broadly average by the time pupils leave. This represents good progress from their starting points and good achievement for all groups, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Recent results and pupils' work in class demonstrate that progress in mathematics in particular is accelerating apace. Progress in writing is less impressive and, although improving, is not at the same pace as progress in reading and numeracy. This is partly a result of insufficient opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in all subjects of the curriculum and to reflect and share ideas with their classmates before they begin their work.

Pupils have a high regard for the school. Behaviour is good and pupils respect their surroundings. Moreover, eco warriors' grow vegetables and do much to protect the environment. The school council, 'buddies' and 'cultural ambassadors' put forward suggestions as to how the school could be improved, look after younger children and make their constituents aware of activities open to them. Attendance is broadly average but the school recognises that more could be done to motivate poor attenders to come to school more often.

Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. The school places considerable emphasis on accurate assessment of pupils' performance as a prerequisite to providing relevant challenge for them to reach and even exceed their targets. The curriculum comprises a good balance between activities designed to foster pupils' personal development and their academic progress. Pupils receive good care and guidance, and learning support assistants provide effective support for those who sometimes find the work difficult.

As a result of accurate self-evaluation of performance in all areas and the application of well-thought-out action plans for development, the school has made significant improvements since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching is more consistently good, assessment is used more effectively and the quality of care, guidance and support is better. As a consequence, pupils now make good progress and standards are higher. Without doubt, the school knows itself well, has good capacity to sustain improvement and provides good value for money.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress in writing by:
 - giving pupils more opportunities to write about real-life situations
 - giving pupils more opportunities to practise their writing skills across the curriculum
 - planning activities which are accessible to all pupils' learning needs in writing
 - encouraging pupils to reflect on their work and share their ideas with their peers before they put pen to paper
 - establishing a more corporate approach to teaching handwriting skills.
- Further promote and celebrate high levels of attendance, in order to encourage those who do not come to school as regularly as they should to attend more often.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils are generally engaged in lessons, enjoy learning and there is strong evidence that they are raising their aspirations. When given the opportunity, they are more than willing to support each other and to act as extra resources for their classmates' learning. Children's skills and knowledge are below age-related expectations overall when they enter Reception and many are well below in communication, language and literacy and in personal development. Pupils make good progress and achieve well across the school to reach broadly average attainment by the time they leave. Attainment in reading has been above average for two years and pupils in the current Year 6 group are on course to reach their most challenging targets in all areas, but particularly in mathematics. Achievement and progress in writing are not as good as they could be but where pupils are given assignments in relation to real-life situations, their progress improves. Pupils present their work well but their work is sometimes difficult to read because there is not a consistent approach across the school to the teaching of handwriting.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe and their comprehensive knowledge of the possible dangers of using the internet belies their years. Support for younger children by their older 'buddies' is a highlight of school life and pupils' work for charity and their sponsorship of a youngster in a Kenyan orphanage demonstrate their enviable generosity of spirit. Pupils conduct themselves maturely in lessons and around the school and treat their peers, teachers, learning support assistants and visitors with dignity and respect. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and they have a keen awareness of the cultural diversity in the United Kingdom and also of religions which are different from their own. Most pupils attend well and their punctuality is good. However, a minority of pupils do not come to school as often as they should and the school does not do enough to promote and celebrate attendance and also convince parents and carers of its importance.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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?

The quality of teaching is good overall and there are examples of outstanding practice in both key stages. In the best sessions, an excellent Year 6 numeracy lesson for example, expectations for what pupils can do are high, challenge motivates them to do their very best and a range of engaging activities add both competition and fun to the learning. In these lessons pupils are determined to succeed and challenge themselves to make better progress. As a result, pupils of all levels of ability are often surprised at what they can do. On occasions, and particularly in writing, pupils are not given enough opportunities to prepare, including sharing their ideas with their peers, before they begin their assignments. Assessment is a developing strength and has improved markedly since the previous inspection. The monitoring of pupils' progress is now more regular and more accurate. Information is used effectively to plan teaching activities and to ensure that data is transferred with confidence on to the next year. The school is aware, however, that writing assignments are sometimes not focused well enough on the learning needs of individuals and, as a result, a minority of pupils find the work too difficult. Marking is very good indeed, is linked closely to pupils' targets and provides them with a wealth of information on how they can improve their work.

The curriculum fosters pupils' personal development, confidence and self-esteem well. Its constituent parts emphasise the importance of pupils' academic, social and emotional well-being and encourage them to try their best in everything they do. However, there

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

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

are currently not enough opportunities for pupils to reinforce their writing skills across the curriculum. There is a wide range of well-attended after-school clubs, performing arts and Key Stage 1 cookery to name but two, and pupils speak highly of the variety of cultural activities. They enjoy, for example, the weekly ballroom dancing tuition, the 'artist in residence' initiative and the visit to Bolton Museum, where they analyse African artefacts.

Care and respect for all is an integral part of the ethos of the school. Pastoral care is therefore strong and recognised as such by parents, carers and their children. As pupils say, 'The grown-ups protect us and they talk to us if we are feeling sad.' Parents and carers pay tribute in particular to, in their words, 'the hands-on approach' of the headteacher who, they believe, knows each child as an individual. There is good support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities by the committed team of learning support assistants and this enables these pupils to make the same good progress as their peers. Similarly, pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are identified accurately and they, too, receive focused support. Children are inducted well into school and pupils' transition across years and key stages is good.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher leads by example and emphasises the importance of teamwork at all levels and among teaching, support and administrative staff. The relatively new senior leadership team has had a rapid and positive impact in many areas of the school since the previous inspection and the raising of pupils' aspirations is at the core of its work. Indeed, staff of all levels of experience and responsibility are totally committed to continuous improvement.

The governing body has a good awareness of the school's strengths and areas for development. It is a most effective group; it offers strong support to staff and pupils but it also holds the leadership team to account with rigour.

Child protection and safeguarding procedures are good overall and are exemplary in some respects, in relation to the checking the suitability of adults to work with children of this age. The school rejects discrimination in all its forms and promotes equality of opportunity well.

The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers is good and the workshops introduced by the school to involve parents and carers more in their

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

children's learning have been well received. The school is now looking to extend the scope of this initiative and encourage parents and carers to see the value of their children's good attendance.

The school takes pride in its promotion of community cohesion within its walls, in the local area and further afield. Pupils and staff take a full interest in the joys, sorrows, hopes and fears of all faith and cultural groups in the school and they engage in a wide range of local community projects. There are international links too and the school has plans to develop these further.

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Reception class with skills and knowledge which are generally below what is typical for this age. The skills of many in communication, language and literacy and in personal, social and emotional development are well below expectations. Good leadership and management have ensured that the accommodation in the area has been completely redesigned since the previous inspection. As a result, there are now several learning areas, including two outdoors, where pupils can make independent choices about their learning and initiate their own activities. These improvements in accommodation, allied to good teaching, accurate assessment and a curriculum designed to meet individual needs, lead to children's good progress in all areas of learning. They are becoming increasingly independent, enjoy the many practical activities they have both indoors and outdoors and are keen to show visitors what they are doing.

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

Parents and carers are most positive about how the staff communicate with them and they speak highly about the warm home–school relationships. Safeguarding procedures are very good and the well-being of children is at the heart of everything the setting tries to do. The Early Years Foundation Stage teacher and the learning support assistants work well as a team and treat children with the utmost sensitivity, encouraging them continuously, and with success, to get on well with each other and to become more inquisitive about the world around them.

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

A very large majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaires are entirely happy with their children's experiences at the school. Most believe that their children enjoy school and that they are helped to have a healthy lifestyle. Almost all parents and carers believe the school is led and managed effectively and comment that the headteacher and staff go out of their way to make pupils feel special. A very small minority of parents and carers believe the school does not prepare their children for the future. Inspectors found no evidence during the inspection to endorse this view. Also, a few parents and carers believe that their children are not making enough progress at the school. Inspection evidence demonstrates that progress has risen since the previous inspection and that it is now good. They accept, however, that progress in writing is not as good as that in reading and mathematics.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Gregory's RC Primary School, Farnworth, Bolton 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 58 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 192 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	36	62	20	34	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	38	66	18	31	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	32	55	18	31	8	14	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	57	19	33	5	9	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	35	60	18	31	4	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	53	23	40	4	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	62	20	34	2	3	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)	28	48	22	38	6	10	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	32	55	22	38	3	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	50	24	41	2	3	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	47	24	41	5	9	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	37	64	19	33	2	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	62	18	31	3	5	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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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.



22 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Gregory's RC Primary School, Farnworth, Bolton, BL4 8AJ

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. You were very friendly and polite and we enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn. We are very grateful to those school councillors, buddies, eco warriors and cultural ambassadors who met us on Monday lunchtime and we were pleased to hear your singing in assemblies and watch your ballroom dancing on Tuesday. I would now like to tell you what we found during the inspection.

St Gregory's is a good school and it has improved a lot over the past three years. You are now making good progress, particularly in reading and numeracy, and the standards you reach are rising all the time. You have an excellent understanding of how to eat healthily and why it is important to keep fit. You also feel very safe indeed in school. You receive good and sometimes outstanding teaching and the adults who work with you support you well. Your behaviour is good in lessons and around school and older pupils work hard to look after younger ones. You also support a wide variety of charities: I know the little girl from the orphanage in Kenya really enjoyed coming to see you last week.

Your headteacher and all the other staff are very proud of you too and they want to make St Gregory's even better! I have asked them, therefore, to help you do better in your writing, by giving you more chances to practise your writing skills in all your subjects, and by encouraging you to talk to your classmates about what you are going to write before you start. I have also asked them to make sure that your writing is linked to real-life activities, that you get work which is individually suited to you and that all your teachers help you improve your handwriting in the same way. I have mentioned that they could also celebrate really good attendance more often and encourage those of you who do not always come to school regularly to 'turn over a new leaf' and realise that you cannot make progress if you are not in school.

Thanks again for your kindness and your contribution to the inspection. I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr Jim Kidd

Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 1234 234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.