

St Gregory's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133652
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	381525
Inspection dates	13–14 June 2012
Lead 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	244
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Patricia McTimorney
Headteacher	Peter Mackie
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

David Shearsmith

Additional inspector

John Pattinson

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed eight teachers teaching eighteen lessons, of which three were joint observations with the headteacher. They also paid short visits to other lessons to view the school's overall curriculum and observed short sessions on letters and sounds. In addition, inspectors made visits to an assembly and intervention activities. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, a representative of the governing body and school staff, including senior and middle managers. Inspectors looked at a number of documents, including: the school's self-evaluation documentation; monitoring and evaluation records; development plans; safeguarding policies; and samples of teachers' assessments and planning. Inspectors analysed 56 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, and others completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

The school is an average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who are supported by school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is above average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils are of minority-ethnic heritages and there is none who speaks English as an additional language. The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a unit as Nursery and Reception classes. The school meets the current floor standards, which set the minimum standards expected by the government.

Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes in staffing including the very recent appointment of a deputy headteacher.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory school. The school is improving as a result of recent actions to raise standards. It is not good because teaching is not consistently good and attainment in writing is below average. Leaders also do not focus sufficiently on evaluating progress. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Achievement is satisfactory as pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school. By the age of 11, their attainment is broadly average. Standards are higher in reading and mathematics than in writing. Pupils' writing skills are not sufficiently developed in subjects across the curriculum and marking is variable so that achievement in English is not as secure as it is in mathematics. Progress in writing is also being hindered by pupils' inconsistent handwriting and presentation skills.
- Teaching is satisfactory. In some lessons it is good but it varies throughout the school. In some classes pupils engage enthusiastically in their learning and progress well. In others, pupils' needs are not as well met. Occasionally, teaching assistants are not used well to support lower-attaining pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory overall and they say they feel safe at school. They learn in a calm and welcoming environment, although they sometimes become restless when learning does not fully engage them. Attendance is now average following a drive to ensure pupils attend school.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Despite staffing difficulties, the headteacher and other leaders have successfully maintained a secure climate for learning. The management of teachers' performance has been effective, so that teaching is improving. Subject leaders are also becoming increasingly more effective. Leaders, however, do not evaluate progress in lessons or pupils' books systematically.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing by:
 - providing pupils with sufficient opportunities to write for a purpose across the curriculum
 - developing a consistent approach to marking work so that pupils are given clear indications of how to improve and time to respond to the advice given
 - improving pupils' handwriting and presentation skills.

- Improve the proportion of teaching that is good or better by:
 - making certain that the work set is always carefully matched to pupils' needs
 - ensuring pupils are fully engaged in lessons so that they are inspired to learn and make better progress
 - making better use of teaching assistants in lessons, especially in how they support lower-attaining pupils.

- Improve leadership at all levels by ensuring that there is a greater focus on measuring pupils' progress, when monitoring lessons and pupils' books.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the nursery with skills below those typical for their age and with particular weaknesses in their literacy skills. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and attainment is broadly average when they move to Year 1. Writing is still a relatively weaker area as there are insufficient opportunities for mark making. Children are, however, helped to learn by some good teaching and a range of resources both indoors and outdoors.

Within Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils make satisfactory progress overall, although progress in writing is weaker, particularly at Key Stage 1. This is because there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to write across the curriculum and marking does not always show pupils how to improve their work. Inconsistent handwriting and presentation skills also inhibit pupils' progress in writing. Attainment in reading by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 is broadly average and improving throughout the school. The school has implemented a new programme of teaching sounds that letters make; this is having a positive impact and many pupils are now making good progress in reading. Younger pupils enjoy their learning, where they acquire good skills and knowledge to support their reading. Throughout the school the progress seen in lessons is always at least satisfactory and sometimes good, and this is confirmed by the work seen in books. The vast majority of parents and carers say that their children are making progress, although some were concerned about variability in progress as a result of changes to teaching staff; a view supported by inspection evidence.

Where teaching is good, particularly in mathematics, pupils are engaged and inspired to learn through interesting activities that are well matched to their needs and, as a result, they make good progress. This was seen in a Year 2 lesson where pupils were keen to solve problems by estimating and measuring lines and then working out how to make a picture frame.

In weaker lessons, the work does not always meet pupils' needs. At times, teaching assistants do not allow disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs to be sufficiently independent in their learning so that they do not make sufficiently rapid progress. This was seen in a writing lesson in Key Stage 2 where lower-attaining pupils did not have an opportunity to write for themselves and work was too directed.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is improving, with an increasing number of lessons where teaching is good. Parents and carers say that teaching is variable although some comment positively on the way teachers help their children to make progress. A small number of parents and carers expressed concerns about teaching not meeting their children's needs. Inspection evidence supports this view because teaching is variable in quality across the school. In a small number of lessons, teachers do not always engage all pupils, and they do not meet their needs sufficiently well, particularly in writing. However, many teachers have improved the way they use assessment information to ensure that work is matched to pupils' needs in mathematics. Teachers are now much better at assessing pupils' learning using the school's new assessment and tracking system. As a result, the pace of learning is picking up.

Improvements have been made to the curriculum, particularly in the ways reading and mathematics are taught. These changes have had a positive impact on teaching and pupils' progress so that in reading and mathematics pupils' needs are being met increasingly well. Teaching assistants make a satisfactory contribution to learning. They are developing their skills at delivering interventions and teaching the sounds that letters make, which is helping disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. They are less proficient at helping lower-attaining pupils to write as they sometimes over-direct them. Some lessons do not always allow enough opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and pupils respond well to praise. There is some very clear marking that gives pupils good quality guidance about how to improve their work although this is not always the case in writing.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Although pupils are quite keen to learn and contribute in lessons they sometimes become restless when teaching does not sufficiently interest them. Changes in staffing have also contributed to variations in behaviour over time. Pupils participate in paired work and whole-class talk although there are not always sufficient opportunities to work independently and collaboratively. A minority of parents and carers raised concerns about behaviour, but school records of incidents and discussion with pupils, including about bullying, showed that incidents have been few and have usually been handled well. In the playground pupils are safe because of

the number of adults and playground helpers. The school has also received a local award for the quality of its playground support. Pupils say that most adults respond well to any problems they have.

Parents and carers agree that the school ensures the safety of all pupils and inspection evidence supports this view. Pupils are polite and courteous to each other and towards visitors. Pupils say they are well cared for and show a good understanding of how to assess risk. The school's curriculum ensures that pupils are given experiences to understand about fire and water safety as well as cyber bullying. Attendance has improved markedly in the past year but a small number of parents and carers still do not ensure that their children attend regularly and on time.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, well supported by the new deputy headteacher, is driving improvements after having successfully steered the school through a period of staffing changes. The monitoring of pupils' achievement has improved using the school's new tracking and assessment procedures. Although this has been beneficial in providing support for individuals, particularly in Year 6, it has not been fully effective in accelerating pupils' progress in writing. The impact has, however, been felt in rising attainment in mathematics and reading. Leaders at all levels do not focus sufficiently on progress when evaluating lessons or work in pupils' books. Professional development and performance management have been effective in improving the quality of teaching and learning, although it is not consistently good. Leadership at all levels is showing signs of improvement and the school has the capacity to improve further.

The governing body is well informed and well organised. Its members are closely involved in the life of the school and are now better at challenging school leaders in order to improve pupils' progress. They also ensure that safeguarding meets requirements so that pupils are kept safe. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that generally meets the needs of most groups of pupils and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, enabling them to make satisfactory progress. The school provides equality of opportunity for all pupils and tackles discrimination robustly.

The school has strong partnerships with other organisations to enable it to extend pupils' learning opportunities. Visits, visiting speakers and themed weeks are bringing learning to life for pupils and the school is developing these further.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



15 June 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Gregory's Catholic Primary School, Stockton-on-Tees,
TS19 9AD**

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited you recently. We enjoyed watching you learn and play, and hearing what you thought about your school. Your school gives you a satisfactory education. You said you like school and you particularly like going out on visits. Most of you behave well but some of you do not concentrate all of the time in lessons.

The school looks after you well and ensures that you are safe. Your teachers are working hard to make your lessons even more enjoyable to ensure that you are making good progress.

Your headteacher and the staff know that the school can be better. I have asked them to make the school better by making sure that:

- you improve your writing by improving your handwriting and presentation, as well as giving you more opportunities to write in other subjects and by improving marking so you know how to improve your work
- teaching improves so it is more engaging and meets your needs, as well as ensuring teaching assistants support you better in lessons
- leaders in the school measure your progress more effectively in lessons and in your books.

I hope that you will help the staff to make these improvements by working as hard as you can, by behaving well, attending every day and by always acting on the advice that you are given.

Yours sincerely

David Shearsmith
Lead inspector

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