

St George's Catholic School

The Mount, Taunton, TA1 3NR

Inspection dates 26–27 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Since the last inspection there has been significant improvement because of rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.
- A new system for tracking pupils' progress and new strategies for teaching English and mathematics have ensured that teaching is now good in almost all lessons and some is outstanding.
- Over the last two years this has enabled all groups of pupils to make good progress and by Year 6 attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has risen to above average.
- The high proportion of pupils for whom English is not their first language make especially good progress.
- The school's very strong provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a major contributory factor in their excellent behaviour and attitude to learning.
- The experienced headteacher and the governing body monitoring committee have worked exceptionally well together to create effective systems for rapidly driving forward improvement.
- Teachers have fully embraced all opportunities for developing their leadership skills. This has resulted in a competent and well-prepared team who are very ambitious for pupils to make the best possible progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Teachers have not yet had enough time to share all of the good practice that exists in order to secure even more outstanding teaching and ensure that all pupils make the best possible progress they can.
- Although pupils understand how to improve their work, sometimes there are too many targets for them to choose from which makes it difficult for pupils to know which are going to help them most to improve.
- Targets are not always written in language that is easy for them to understand.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 12 lessons, observing six teachers across the school. They also talked to pupils about their work and heard individual pupils read from Years 3 and 5 as well as others in lessons.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including pupils' work, systems for checking progress, records relating to behaviour and attendance, safeguarding procedures, the school's self-evaluation and planning for improvement, records of monitoring the quality of teaching and the minutes of the governing body meetings.
- Because Year 6 were away on a residential visit at the time of the inspection, inspectors scrutinised pupils' books both from last year and current work.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, school staff and groups of pupils. Individual pupils were spoken to in lessons and around the school. A telephone conversation took place with a school adviser from the local authority.
- Questionnaires from 18 members of staff were analysed. The inspectors took account of the views expressed in 67 online responses to the Parent View questionnaire, three letters from parents and carers, and during informal meetings with parents and carers before school.

Inspection team

Anna Sketchley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Robert Arnold

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St George's is an average-sized primary school. All pupils are taught in single-age classes and attend from across the town and local villages.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled and those with special educational needs supported through school action is average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled and those with special educational needs supported by school action plus, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils with a parent or carer in the armed services) is below average.
- The number of pupils from ethnic minority groups, including those who are in the very early stages of learning English, is above average.
- The school provides breakfast and after-school clubs which were visited during the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils' good achievement continues to rise by continuing to improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good with an increasing amount of outstanding teaching by regularly sharing the outstanding practice that already exists within the school.
- Limit the number of targets each pupil is given to a manageable number so that it is easy for them to identify the most appropriate at any given time and ensure that they are worded in a way that is easy for them to understand.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Levels of knowledge and skills when children join the school vary from year to year but are often below those expected, particularly in language and literacy and some areas of mathematics. A high number of children are at the early stages of learning to speak English.
- However, teaching is good and sometimes outstanding so all children are very well supported and make good progress from their starting points.
- Letters and sounds and the development of reading and writing skills are taught very effectively every day in small groups. An exciting play script enabled more-able pupils to make rapid progress when learning about the importance of punctuation and how to read with expression.
- Reading has a high profile and pupils say that the school provides 'lots of good books'. They really enjoy using the school library, finding books recommended to them by their teachers as 'a good read'. Systematically taught strategies help them to competently tackle unfamiliar words so by Year 6 national test results show that three quarters of pupils are reading at a higher level than is expected.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and make good progress because tasks are related to stimulating experiences. They used interesting and adventurous vocabulary in their writing in response to an exciting visit from a theatre company.
- Gaps in pupils' mathematical understanding have been addressed. Skills are very well taught and pupils enjoy taking part in the local 'Maths Challenge'. Year 4 pupils demonstrated above average skills in a mental mathematics session when they were challenged to add and take away in a variety of number problems including decimals.
- Pupils whose circumstances might make them vulnerable, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and pupils for whom English is not their first language, are very well supported, so from their starting points they make the same good progress as all other pupils. The gap is closing considerably over time and approximately half of these pupils make more than the expected two levels of progress. Learning was particularly successful for one pupil when they were ably supported in their home language by a teaching assistant who encouraged them to talk in English of a recent event at home about which they were very excited.
- Interventions and staff training for pupils eligible for pupil premium funding, such as support for small-group work to learn key skills in reading and writing and personal and social support, are enhancing provision. Attainment is at least in line with that expected for these pupils, and often higher, and their progress is at least at the two levels expected between Years 2 and 6 and sometimes better. Consequently there is no gap between their achievement and that of all other pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- Relationships between pupils and adults are very strong leading to excellent behaviour and a positive climate for learning. Pupils concentrate well and try very hard to succeed so that over time they achieve well.
- Teachers often set pupils challenging tasks. Assessment is used exceptionally well to ensure that work is set at the appropriate level to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Pupils rise to the challenges they are set, sometimes choosing the next one for themselves if they think they can do it. They say, 'If you finish your task there is another challenge waiting.'
- Visits and visitors at the beginning of topics make learning very interesting and stimulating and this leads to high engagement during lessons.
- Teachers ensure that all pupils participate actively in the learning, using questioning well and targeting individual pupils with specific questions that successfully probe their understanding.

- Pupils always know exactly what they are expected to learn because at the beginning of the lesson teachers share the learning objective with them in easy to understand language.
- Teachers demonstrate learning very clearly for pupils often using interactive whiteboards to help their explanations.
- Pupils try hard to use their individual targets to remind them of how to improve their work. However, there are sometimes too many to choose from and they are not always in language that is easy for them to understand. This sometimes hinders their ability to improve their work.
- Opportunities for pupils to work together, discussing their ideas with a partner and supporting each other in their learning, make a substantial contribution to the development of their personal and social skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- There have been no exclusions since the last inspection and incidents of poor behaviour are extremely rare. Racial harassment and bullying are unheard of. Records show that behaviour over time is excellent and parents, carers and pupils support this view.
- Provision for teaching pupils how to keep safe through, for example, anti-bullying week and internet safety techniques, is well developed so that pupils have a very good knowledge of how to keep themselves safe. They are very sure about to whom they should go if, on rare occasions, they are worried. Pupils say, 'Teachers don't rest until it's sorted.'
- Pupils really enjoy coming to school and rigorous procedures to deal with absence are helping attendance to improve although it remains average. This is mainly due to some parents and carers taking long holidays to visit family abroad. Punctuality is good which means that no time is lost at the beginning of the day and lessons always begin promptly.
- Behaviour in lessons, around the building and on the playground is impeccable and makes a very strong contribution to the good progress pupils are making. They are unfailingly polite and well mannered.
- Pupils get on very well together and older pupils appreciate the opportunity to look after the younger ones and set them a good example.
- The many responsibilities pupils take on around the school and the much enjoyed 'Lunch Bunch' meetings with the headteacher when, in small groups, their views are sought about school life, bring pupils a sense of great pride in their school.

The leadership and management are good

- Since the last inspection the infectious drive, enthusiasm and vision of the headteacher has welded together a strong staff team fully committed to further development. Along with robust challenge from governors this has brought about significant improvement.
- The major contributory factor has been the strict monitoring of the school's performance especially pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. Rigorous procedures have ensured that the school knows exactly what has to be done. As one staff member explained, 'everyone is on board' and involved in planning the priorities and actions, and as a result improvements have been rapid.
- A new system to help teachers keep track of pupils' progress and plan very carefully the next steps in pupils' learning, alongside initiatives to improve standards in English and mathematics, has been very successful.
- Teachers with responsibilities, particularly in assessment and English, expertly carry out their leadership roles. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

- Teachers' performance has been regularly monitored and high-quality training provided both for the staff as a whole and for individuals, successfully improving the quality of teaching to good with a significant proportion that is outstanding. The school realises that better use could be made of the outstanding practice in order to raise the quality of teaching further.
- All of these measures demonstrate that the school has a strong capacity for further improvement.
- The curriculum is creatively organised, enriched by many visits and visitors, giving pupils memorable experiences and offering good opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. Learning is further enhanced by a wide selection of after-school clubs, especially a variety of sports, gardening, art and music. All are very well attended.
- Sports funding is especially well used to provide links with sports partnerships that plan events and leagues. The school also has its own sports hall and indoor swimming pool ensuring that every child learns to swim.
- Excellent partnerships with other schools, external agencies, the church and the local, wider and global communities support pupils' learning and development very well. As a result, there is outstanding provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Equal opportunities for different groups of pupils are promoted exceptionally well and are a great strength of the school. No form of discrimination is tolerated.
- The governing body and the school staff ensure that safeguarding procedures are followed very rigorously and all requirements are fully met.
- The school has had very light touch support from the local authority.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are highly involved in the work of the school and monitor its progress assiduously. They receive regular reports about pupils' progress, ask very challenging questions and ensure that all deadlines are met. As a result they have considerable knowledge about the school's strengths and areas for development and are helping it to improve rapidly. They are very supportive of the school, visit regularly and carry out their statutory duties diligently, undergoing a wide range of training especially in regard to safeguarding pupils. Governors have a wide range of skills from the world of work which they use very well to help the school in its development. An independent education consultant assists governors with setting rigorous performance objectives for the headteacher. Governors are very well informed about teachers' performance and salary progression and about the use of the pupil premium and its impact upon eligible pupils.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	123851
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	426765

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	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen MacConnell
Headteacher	Peter Hanratty
Date of previous school inspection	14–15 September 2011
Telephone number	01823 284130
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