School report

St Gregory's Catholic Primary School

Montreal Road,Netherley, Liverpool, L27 7AG

Inspection dates	3–4 December 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.

- Pupils behaviour and attitudes to learning, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development overall, are outstanding. They feel very safe in school and their attendance is improving rapidly.
- Year on year, pupils make good progress from their different starting points. Their good achievement is an improvement since the previous inspection.
- Teaching is consistently good and some is outstanding. Teachers use their good subject knowledge well to challenge pupils and bring the best out of them.
- Leaders' management of teaching is an outstanding feature of the school's leadership. It has brought significant improvement since the previous inspection.
- Governance is good and provides strong challenge and support for the school.
- The way that the school works with parents, and the quality of care and support provided for pupils, are also outstanding features of the school's work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough consistently outstanding teaching to judge the quality as outstanding overall. Sometimes, pupils' learning is too slow in lessons and aspects of teachers' marking could be improved. Pupils are sometimes too slow in getting started on tasks.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 are below average.
- There is scope to improve the proportions of pupils who achieve the higher levels, especially in writing, at the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons. Two of those were observed jointly with the deputy headteacher, and one with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with pupils, parents, senior leaders and teaching staff, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took into account 14 responses from parents via the on-line questionnaire Parent View, as well as questionnaires completed by staff members.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including: national assessment data and the schools own assessments; minutes from governing body meetings; the schools' own view of its work; safeguarding information; and samples of pupils' work.

Inspection team

Kevin Johnson, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Vanessa MacDonald	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This as an average-sized primary school in which most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action is above average.
- An above-average proportion is supported by school action plus or has a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is more than double the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets current floor standards, which are the minimum government expectations for attainment and progress at the end of Year 6.
- A new venture for the school is the provision for children from the age of two years.
- A breakfast club and after-school care are also provided by the school.
- Some members of staff have worked with the local authority to support literacy, numeracy and science in other schools and to contribute to a national project on the work of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, to raise standards by the end of Year 2, also for the more-able older pupils, and especially with older boys' writing, by:
  - making sure that there is always a fast pace to learning in classes and for all groups of pupils by making the best use of time available
  - building on the successful systems for marking already in the school so that pupils consistently have time to check their work, respond to the marking and set themselves targets for improvement
  - using additional adults in the classroom to involve groups of pupils in practical learning more quickly.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The school has very recently begun to provide a safe and creative environment for children from the age of two as part of its Early Years Foundation Stage. Children are cared for very well and their early social skills are nurtured to help them become better prepared for their entry into Nursery. As this is the first term of provision, it has not yet had any influence on children's entry into Nursery but there are early signs that children are getting off to a good start.
- When children enter Nursery their abilities are generally very low in relation to expectations for their age. Good teaching and some exciting challenges help them to gain in confidence and make their own choices. Social and emotional development is given high priority.
- Although still below expected levels for their age when they leave Reception, children have made good gains in their all-round abilities by the time they start Year 1.
- There is an upward trend in standards in Key Stage 1. Although reading, writing and mathematics were below average in national terms in the most recent tests, that was a considerable improvement from the previous year. The school is very persistent in its drive to push up standards further. Progress is picking up due to the very challenging targets set by the school. Most pupils make good progress from their starting points. Currently, an increasing number of pupils are on track to achieve better than nationally expected levels.
- Standards at the end of Year 6 are average. That represents good achievement from pupils' standards at the end of Year 2, and again indicates the improving trend in standards overall. However, in the national tests the proportion of pupils gaining the higher Level 5 was lower than the national figures and this is now a school focus. Pupils' current work and the school's assessments show that good progress across the key stage is well established. However, boys' writing is not as strong as it could be.
- Pupils in Year 2 enjoy reading and talking about their favourite story characters. They use their knowledge of letters and sounds confidently to work out unfamiliar words. The most-able readers use good expression when they read. All read regularly at home. By the end of Year 6 pupils read fluently, with good understanding and use punctuation well. They select from a good range of books in school and have good knowledge of popular authors and their particular styles of writing.
- The most-able pupils are often suitably challenged in lessons through carefully planned work. There are generally good opportunities for them to work in groups to solve problems on their own. The school knows that there is scope to improve the achievement of the most-able pupils, especially in writing. Their progress is checked through each class and assessments predict a steady increase in the numbers capable of reaching Level 5 in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do well in the school. There is extensive well planned extra support for those who need it and pupils' learning plans are very effective because they take account of their own views. As a result of this strong provision, pupils make good and at times rapid progress.
- The attainment gap between those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and others in the school is narrowing rapidly due to the school's effective use of additional staffing and resources to support that group and ensure equality of opportunity for them. Teachers' assessments show virtually no difference in writing standards between this group and others and a positive picture of improving progress for all pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and the school records over time show that to have been a continuous process. Teaching is good and some of it is outstanding because leaders have made their expectations clear.

- Outstanding teaching reflects teachers' subject knowledge and expertise. In a physical education lesson, for example, it was the exceptional quality of the teacher's coaching and demonstration that encouraged the very best sequences of movement from the pupils.
- There was an imaginative approach to an outstanding mathematics lesson. The teacher took pupils out of the classroom and had them group themselves into multiples, factors, or prime numbers to test their understanding of how number systems work. This exercise called on pupils' personal qualities and negotiating skills, as well as their mathematics; learning was great fun.
- Generally lessons are well planned and take full account of pupils' varying abilities. Usually, there is a sense of urgency in the lessons to get learning underway. Nevertheless, the pace does slacken at times, for example when teachers allow too much thinking or discussion time, or when time is lost trying to get information from uncertain pupils when it is more productive to show them and keep the pace of learning moving.
- Some groups of pupils could learn more practically earlier on in the lesson. Teaching assistants' skills are not always used to the full at these times to ensure pupils make the best possible progress. Usually, though, teaching assistants make a significant contribution during activity time and use their impressive range of skills and subject knowledge well.
- Teachers use resources well to help pupils' understanding and make learning more interesting. Laptops and ipads are increasing features in lessons as an aid to learning and to record what has been done. Background music and candlelight created a very calm and quiet atmosphere in one lesson that helped pupils concentrate deeply on their writing. A particularly rewarding result was how well the boys responded to the situation to produce thoughtful good-quality work.
- Teachers promote pupils' personal development well by encouraging them to work together and help each other out. This increases their independence as well as giving a better understanding of their progress and what they need to find out next.
- On the whole, teachers use assessment well and understand their pupils' abilities. Marking is generally well focussed and gives clear pointers to improvement. Where some time is given for pupils to respond to marking, and do corrections, for example, step-by step progress is evident in their work. This good practice is not consistent, so pupils in some classes miss out on that good opportunity to make even better progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils describe their school as, 'fun, friendly and fantastic'. They enjoy all that the school has to offer and some would like more, such as more-exciting equipment in the playground. Pupils contribute a great deal to the everyday life of the school. They have a strong voice through the school council. They act as playground buddies, keep a check on recycling and the school's use of energy and carry out a host of duties that help the school to run smoothly.
- Pupils' excellent relationships are guided by the very strong Christian values which the school promotes. Adults in the school are exceptionally strong role models for the ethos of care which is valued by pupils and parents alike. Pupils always feel safe in school and understand clearly the potential dangers they might face outside. They state firmly that there is no bullying, including cyber-bullying, or offensive name-calling. Parents' views and school records confirm that incidents of unacceptable behaviour are very rare.
- Pupils respect one another and adults. They are invariably polite and well mannered wherever they are in the school. Pupils from all backgrounds and circumstances work and play together very harmoniously.
- Behaviour in lessons is excellent and this underpins pupils' good progress and eagerness to learn more. They enjoy learning, including the additional opportunities outside the classroom. After-school sports clubs are very well attended and are a great help in maintaining pupils' enthusiasm for sport and their physical well-being. There is wholesome provision for those who are at school before and after normal hours. The breakfast club is also has positive influence on pupils' punctuality.

- Their improving attendance has seen a rapid increase in recent months. Currently, it is average and continuing to improve. This is due to the level and quality of support the school gives to families. It is also a result of highly effective work by the learning mentors, who check attendance relentlessly and have significantly reduced the amount of persistent absenteeism by establishing trusting working relationships with families. The flourishing breakfast club is a positive contribution to pupils' punctuality and attendance that is much appreciated by parents and pupils.

The leadership and management are good

- The drive and commitment to school improvement shown by all staff and governors is unquestionable. The headteacher and very supportive and effective senior leaders have successfully dealt with issues from the previous inspection and moved the school on from being satisfactory to good. There is no complacency. The mindset is that they will improve further, to outstanding. The local authority is confident that leaders can achieve that, given their success since the previous inspection, and is rapidly scaling down the support it has provided in the past.
- There are excellent systems in the school for managing teachers' performance and bringing improvement. No stone is left unturned to ensure that teachers are given the support they need to improve teaching skills and develop professionally as leaders. Some staff share their skills with other local authority schools and continue to work for higher leadership qualifications.
- In school, teachers recognise the significance of the Teachers Standards in judging their performance. Senior leaders know how to recognise good and outstanding teaching. They check teaching regularly, judge it accurately and are well able to demonstrate best practice themselves.
- Middle managers lead their subjects well and are intent on raising standards and achievement. They are already preparing for the introduction of the new primary schools curriculum in 2014. They plan exciting activities and experiences for pupils, giving them many opportunities to set their sights high. Pupils achieve well in science, physical education and the arts, as well as in literacy and mathematics.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors provide good support and guidance for the direction of the school. They know the school well and the community it serves. They measure the school's academic performance and pupils' progress against national data and have a clear view of what the school's priorities are. Governors take a particular interest in the impact of pupil premium funding. Their commitment to equal opportunities is expressed though rigorous checking. They challenge the school to make sure gaps in attainment between different groups of pupils close rapidly. The governing body sets challenging targets for the headteacher's performance. Governors oversee the performance management of teaching generally and the way that is reflected in salaries. Sports funding is managed carefully so that teachers' skills and pupils' motivation for sport benefit as much as possible. Statutory duties regarding policies and finances are all managed efficiently and safeguarding procedures meet all of the government's requirements.

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	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. 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.

School details

Unique reference number	104678
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	426069

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	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Fr Philip Inch
Headteacher	Paula Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	13 September 2011
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