

St George's Roman Catholic Primary School

1 Winterscale Street, Fishergate, York, North Yorkshire

Inspection dates 2–3 April 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics from their individual starting points.
- Standards are currently above average by the end of Year 6. Pupils read confidently and this helps them to make good progress in other subjects.
- Newcomers, including new learners of English quickly settle in and make good progress.
- Teaching is good across the school and sometimes outstanding. Learning is interesting and purposeful.
- Pupils like their teachers and work hard.
- Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. This is one of the reasons why pupils are making good progress.
- School leaders and governors make sure that pupils are safe and secure. Parents agree that their children feel safe and happy at school.
- Good leadership of teaching means that pupils' achievement is improving at a rapid rate, even for pupils who are at this school for only a short time.
- Governors are closely involved in helping the school to improve further. They visit regularly and know what is going on.
- The headteacher has created a happy, safe and caring school where pupils settle in quickly and do well because they enjoy learning.
- Pupils say, 'It's a really friendly school. We'd like to stay here for longer, up to Year 11!'
- The school continues to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet outstanding. Recent improvements have yet to be sustained over time to raise pupils' achievement further.
- The outdoor learning environment for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage does not provide sufficient opportunities to support children's language development and early writing and mathematical skills.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 10 lessons or parts of lessons taught by nine teachers.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, staff, six governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority. They also had three meetings with groups of pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6 to discuss their work and their views on school.
- The inspection took into account the 29 responses in the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the views of parents in letters and a telephone call. In addition, the inspectors spoke to about 20 parents before and after school.

Inspection team

Lesley Clark, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jonathan Woodyatt

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are White British. About 40% of pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds, including Gypsy Roma. Almost all are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language when they join the school. This is much higher than average.
- Almost 50% of pupils enter or leave the school at different points during the school year. This is a high proportion.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is broadly average as is the proportion supported through school action plus.
- The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is low compared to the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is above average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and children who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of part-time Nursery provision and a Reception class.
- There have been several staffing changes over the past year.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the best practice already in school to ensure that more teaching is outstanding in order to raise pupils' achievement further.
- Improve the outdoor learning environment for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - giving children a wide range of mathematical tasks and activities
 - ensuring children have more opportunities to incorporate writing into their activities
 - extending what is on offer outside to support children's language development.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement is good from pupils' individual starting points. These vary widely according to pupils' prior educational experience. Their attainment is closely checked the day they enter school so that their individual needs can be fully met. As a result pupils new to the school and new learners of English make rapid progress from day one.
- The school tackles discrimination and promotes equal opportunities effectively.
- Children make good progress in the Early Year's Foundation Stage. Often, their language, mathematical and early literacy skills are below average on entry to Nursery. By the end of the Reception Year, about a third of children reach a good level of development. The proportion varies according to when the children join or leave the school during this period.
- Indoor activities are devised creatively to spark children's curiosity and to promote language and mathematical development. For example, children, (including a pirate!), pieced together wooden rail track, corks and sticks to make an elephant while others dabbled their feet in paint to make butterfly pictures. Opportunities outdoors are less stimulating in terms of developing these skills.
- Pupils, including new learners of English, make good progress in learning how letters and sounds link together to form words (phonics). Standards were above average in the 2013 Year 1 phonics screening check. As a result pupils in Years 1 and 2 turn into competent readers, using 'sounding out' as their preferred method of tackling unfamiliar words.
- Currently, standards are slightly above average in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 1 and 2. The most able pupils work at a fast rate, often selecting the 'challenge' and 'super challenge' options in their tasks rather than the 'comfortable' or 'confident' ones. In this way, newcomers to Key Stage 1 choose their level and progress to the next as they gain in confidence and skills.
- Results in the national tests in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 do not give a full picture of pupils' achievements because of the high level of in-year mobility, much of which is unpredictable.
- This is also true of results in the national tests in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6. For instance, in the current Year 6, a third of pupils have no Key Stage 1 test results, a quarter joined the school in Year 5 or Year 6 and nearly half since Year 4.
- Current standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average with a good proportion working within the higher Level 5. New learners of English make rapid progress.
- Pupils read well and with good understanding. They enjoy reading and borrowing books from the class and school libraries, which they help to run. Pupils read out loud confidently, clearly, and expressively. This is a notable strength. Older pupils read regularly with younger ones, making sure that they read every word correctly.
- Pupils achieve well in mathematics from their starting points. The most able pupils forge ahead. By Year 6, they have a good grasp of how to use algebra and formulae to solve mathematical problems.
- Pupils write well, making rapid progress in sentence construction, vocabulary and punctuation. They edit their work effectively, checking it against 'steps to success'. The most able pupils' writing shows flair, as in this extract: 'A menagerie of ghosts, all paper thin and deathly white, fluttered oblivious to...'
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action and school action plus make good progress. This is because they have equal chances to achieve as highly as everyone else in class lessons. They are also supported through a personalised learning plan, which has specific, individual targets that are changed as soon as they are met.
- Pupils supported through the pupil premium make good progress. They do as well as others in school not known to be eligible for free school meals. The most recent test results at the end of Years 2 and 6 in 2013 indicate that there is no significant gap between their learning and that of similar groups nationally, though this can vary according to when pupils join or leave the school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and there is some outstanding practice across the school.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, games and rhymes are used skilfully to develop children's language skills. For example, in a phonics session, Reception children greeted the appearance of a long length of cardboard with glee, commenting that it had been 'a boat and a dinosaur train'. When 'Frank the fox' appeared on the other side, they chanted, 'Frank, Frank, can I cross your river?' and, as they crossed, read out the different 'igh' words they had written.
- In order to accommodate frequent changes of pupils in their classes, good systems have been devised to ensure that everyone achieves well. For example, using 'Fish, find, fathom and feel' as a guide to reading, pupils across the school understand the process of reading with understanding. As pupils in Year 1 observed, 'Fathom means you find something out.'
- Tasks are often open-ended so that the most able pupils can move on rapidly while those who have gaps in their knowledge or skills get extra help. Occasionally, pupils' learning slows when tasks and activities do not match their needs closely enough.
- Most learning is based on what pupils need to learn next and relates to pupils' individual targets. This means that pupils move on quickly. This is highly effective when staff have the confidence to let the most able pupils start on tasks as soon as they are ready to do so, thus leaving time to concentrate on those who need further explanation or support.
- Questioning is good because questions are carefully directed to suit pupils' different levels of language acquisition or ability. This encourages pupils to think and helps them to achieve well.
- Teaching assistants are used well in all classes and in addition they keep careful checks on pupils' understanding in order to accelerate progress.
- Marking is a strength in most classes. It clearly shows pupils what to do to improve their work. Pupils are given time to adjust aspects of their writing or mathematics in the light of these marking comments. As a result pupils learn well because they are taught to be self-critical.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. It is good in lessons and around the school. This helps pupils to achieve well.
- Typically, pupils arrive at school in good time. Lessons start punctually because pupils, including newcomers, quickly get down to work. Attendance is average and improving. Persistent absence is now below average because the school tackles absenteeism strenuously.
- Pupils are attentive in lessons and are keen to succeed. They work hard, ask questions when they do not understand and choose to move on to harder work as soon as they are ready.
- Pupils are good at discussing and holding conversations because they are encouraged to talk. Adults listen and respect their views. As a result pupils also help and respect each other. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- New pupils settle in quickly. They agree, 'People are really kind. We make friends quickly.'
- Behaviour has improved since the school introduced a new behaviour policy. Pupils whose behaviour falls short do not start the next day with 'a clean slate' but have a fixed length of time to put right the previous day's shortcomings before starting afresh. Consequently, pupils are learning to manage their behaviour.
- Pupils feel they have a say in what goes on at school. For example, the 'Flutterby Friends' help at lunchtimes: 'If anyone has troubles we help them and if it's serious we get help from teachers.'
- Lunchtimes and playtimes are purposeful, happy occasions. The use of the primary sport funding to provide more varied sporting opportunities, including extra-curricular clubs for all age groups, has clearly generated great interest and more success in competitive sports.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Clear rules and vigilant staff help

pupils to feel secure. Pupils say they feel safe and their parents agree.

- The school keeps detailed records of isolated incidents relating to name-calling and unkind behaviour, even if these occur outside school, and discusses them in depth with parents and children. For the most part, pupils from widely differing backgrounds get on very well indeed together. Pupils say, 'No one is racist.'
- Pupils know about the different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying. They know how to keep themselves safe and are sure that adults in school would help them if there were any problems.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders ensure that the school provides a good education for all its pupils. What the school provides for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a notable strength.
- Parents with experience of other schools or who are new to English education commented on how 'welcoming and inclusive' this school is and how happy and settled their children are.
- The school has very clear systems to check the achievement of different groups of pupils every term or sooner if pupils move on elsewhere. This enables work to be targeted accurately. Regular meetings to discuss pupils' progress mean that staff are accountable for the progress their pupils make. Close partnerships with parents contribute to this good practice.
- Strong leadership of teaching, combined with meticulous and regular checks on pupils' progress, has minimised the impact of staffing changes on pupils' achievement. Weak teaching has been tackled effectively. The school drew on external support swiftly from the local authority, the diocese and other schools to ensure that staff had extra help when it was needed.
- The systems to check teachers' performance and effectiveness are used well to set ambitious targets to ensure that teaching is consistently good and that staff have up-to-date professional development.
- Middle leaders have a key role in checking and maintaining good quality teaching and learning in different subjects across the school. Innovative and outstanding practices in teaching are beginning to be shared, though this is at an early stage.
- The leadership has identified that the outdoor learning experiences in the Early Years Foundation Stage are less rich than those indoors.
- The curriculum has developed since the last inspection to provide more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their knowledge and skills in a wide range of different contexts. Whole-school projects, such as the recent one on St Patrick, or weekly 'rotation time', when pupils of different ages work together, are complemented by frequent educational visits or visitors to school. Many parents commented on how valuable these are in widening their children's education.
- The primary school sport funding is used well to enhance lunchtime and after-school opportunities so pupils become more skilled at playing a wide range of competitive games and to develop staff expertise in teaching dance.
- The systems to ensure that staff and pupils are safe are robust and fully meet current government requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very supportive, well organised and better placed to challenge and question the school than at the time of the last inspection. They know how well pupils, including those supported through the pupil premium funding, are progressing. They check on pupils' progress and teaching regularly through talking through the data, visiting the school and talking to staff, parents and pupils. From this, they understand how well teaching is led. Governors are closely involved in the management of staff and have tackled staffing issues competently.

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	121647
Local authority	York
Inspection number	443825

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	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Penelope Fewster
Headteacher	Roseleen Mazza
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2010
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