

St Gerard's Roman Catholic Primary and Nursery School

Lugsdale Road, Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 6DD

Inspection dates 8-9 July 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.

- The school is highly respected in the local community. Parents are very complementary about the senior leaders and the staff's support and care for their children.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and Key Stage 1. In 2013, standards at the end of Key Stage 2 were well above average in writing and above average in mathematics and reading.
- This year standards have improved in all subjects at the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 is expected to be well above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those eligible for the pupil premium make the same good and sometimes outstanding progress as their schoolmates.
- All teaching, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are exceptionally strong. Teachers ensure that learning interests the pupils. They make sure there are no barriers to pupils' full participation in all aspects of school life, including trips and after-school activities.
- Pupils' attendance is continually improving. They have a very positive attitude to learning and enjoy coming to school and feel safe. Pupils are polite and mature and enjoy taking on responsibilities.
- The senior leadership team is strong and determined. In a short space of time, and with the full support of staff and of governors, they have significantly improved the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Tasks and activities set are not always at the right level to match the skills and abilities of all pupils, particularly the most able.
- The best practice in marking is not fully shared across the school.
- When marking pupils' work, teachers do not always indicate how they can improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons or parts of lessons, as well as the teaching of small groups of pupils, and sessions aimed at helping pupils to learn to read. Observations were carried out with the deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read from Years 2, 3, 4 and 5, and held discussions with pupils from across the school. Pupils' work in books was scrutinised during lessons and separately with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors took into account 19 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), as well as the school's own surveys of parents' views. Discussions were held with parents at the start of the school day and a meeting took place with a parent. Questionnaires completed by 17 members of staff were also taken into account.
- Meetings were held with eight governors, including the Chair and the vice-chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority School Improvement Service, a member of a local English language service and a member of staff from a local high school.
- Various school documents were examined. These included: the school's review of its own performance, records of the school's checks on the quality of teaching, development plans, reports to the governing body, external evaluations of the school's work, data on pupils' progress, records of pupils' attendance, behaviour records and safeguarding documentation.

Inspection team

Lenford White, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Paul Smith

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is almost three times greater than the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The school has an increasing number of pupils from minority ethnic groups. Almost all are Polish and speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- All teaching staff, including the headteacher and senior leadership team, four newly qualified teachers and middle leaders have all been appointed since the previous inspection. Two teaching assistants have been appointed and the governing body has been reorganised. Extensive building work has taken place in most parts of the school.
- The school works closely with a local high school to support its most able pupils in mathematics and writing.
- The school provides a breakfast and after-school service.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching further, particularly in Key Stage 1, in order to raise pupils' attainment by:
 - ensuring that tasks and activities are set at the right level to match pupils' skills and abilities, particularly the most able
 - ensuring that the best practise in marking is shared across the school
 - ensuring that when marking pupils' work, teachers always indicate how pupils can improve.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils' achievement is good. In 2013, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 was below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Their performance in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 was well below average, while writing was outstanding. This year pupils have made good progress in Key Stage 1 and good or outstanding progress in Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. At the end of Key Stage 1 in 2014, pupils' attainment in all subjects is below average, but is much improved on previous years. The school's most recent test scores show that the attainment of all pupils in all subjects at the end of Key Stage 2 is above average.
- Children enter the Nursery class with skills and abilities much lower than those expected for their age in all areas of learning. However, teachers and teaching assistants ensure that they are exceptionally well cared for in the lively and engaging indoor and outdoor learning areas. As a result, children make good progress and an increasing number enter Key Stage 1 with the skills and abilities expected for their age.
- Good leadership, training and advice in mathematics has paid off this year. Pupils' performance in this subject has rapidly improved with some groups, including boys, making outstanding progress.
- The school has successfully sustained its good work in writing. Good teaching and the linking of writing activities to school visits has helped to ensure that pupils make good and some make outstanding progress in this subject.
- Pupils make good progress in reading. They are well read and enjoy books from a wide range of authors. The less able readers use their phonic skills effectively (the sounds that letters make) to help them to identify and read unfamiliar words.
- The school has an increasing number of pupils from minority ethnic groups, mostly from Eastern European countries and almost all with English as an additional language. The excellent support provided from the school's language specialist, coupled with the school's exceptional relationship with parents, ensures that these pupils make outstanding progress across most year-groups.
- The school's work to promote equality of opportunity is very effective. Previous gaps between boys and girls have been eliminated. This year boys have made outstanding progress in Year 6 in reading and in Year 1 in writing.
- The attainment of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, in English and mathematics was as good as their classmates at the end of Year 6 in 2013. It was lower than similar groups of pupils nationally. This year these pupils are about one term behind their classmates overall in English and mathematics, but their attainment is much better than similar groups of pupils nationally.
- Support given to parents, the work of teachers from a local high school and opportunities to work with older schoolmates have all helped to ensure the good achievement of the most able pupils.
- Teachers' meet every half term to assess pupils' progress and this has helped to ensure that all pupils, including those who are disabled and those with special educational needs make at least good progress in all subjects. The school ensures that all pupils have equality of opportunity to succeed.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good. Teachers benefit from effective mentoring and support from the deputy headteacher and are well supported by a well-trained team of subject leaders.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enjoy learning. Teachers and teaching assistants allow children to explore the world around them, have high expectations of children's behaviour and what they can achieve. This was evident during a phonics session in the Reception class where pupils made good progress as they eagerly engaged in a game to refresh their knowledge

of the letters and sounds that they had learned previously.

- Mathematics is taught well and has greatly improved this year. For example, teachers provide pupils with activities which stretch their learning. This was evident in a Year 5 mathematics class. Having identified a gap in pupils' learning the teacher reminded them of the rules regarding percentages. After ensuring that all knew what to do, pupils were assigned various tasks. The most able worked out how much money they would save in a 30% off sale, while others calculated various percentages of a range of numbers.
- Whenever possible, teachers link writing to topical issues and take the opportunity to explore facts about other countries. This was the case in a Year 3 English class, where pupils were learning about wildlife in the tropical rain forests of Brazil. The teacher very skilfully developed pupils' understanding of past and present tenses, before providing them with different activities. Working in their small groups, many, including those with English as an additional language, made exceptional progress. One pupil wrote, 'Jaguars have lovely soft, leopard-disguising fur'.
- However, pupils do not always made such good progress. This mostly occurs when tasks and activities are not set at the right level to match the skills and abilities of pupils, particularly the most able.
- Most pupils know the levels that they are working at, but not all can say exactly what they need to do to improve their learning. This is because when marking pupils' work, teachers do not always indicate to them how they can improve their work. While there is good practice in marking, in Year 6 for example, this is yet to be fully shared across the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Their attitudes to learning are positive, and although below average, attendance continues to improve. They enjoy finding out new things and work together exceptionally well. Pupils' behave consistently well both in and around the school. They are impeccably presented and care for one another.
- Pupils who spoke with inspectors believe that behaviour is good most of the time. The overwhelming majority of parents who completed Parent View and the school's own surveys of parents' views are of the same opinion. Those who spoke with inspectors were very complimentary of the school's work to develop pupils both academically and socially, and of the success of its efforts to ensure that pupils are courteous and well-mannered.
- Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities and eagerly do so as librarians, prefects and playground buddies. Pupils say that they are confident in sharing any concerns with any adult, including lunchtime supervisors and the headteacher.
- Teachers consistently apply the school rules regarding behaviour. More experienced staff work well to manage the behaviour of the minority of pupils who find it difficult to always behave well. Teachers new to the profession are given help to ensure that they are consistent in their expectations as to how pupils should behave.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they always feel safe at school because their teachers look after them. The school operates a zero tolerance policy towards racist name calling and all forms of bullying. The impact of this policy is evident as pupils are adamant that no form of discriminatory behaviour ever takes place at school.
- Older pupils are fully aware of the importance of staying safe while using the internet. They know how cyber bullying can occur and that they can call on their 'Cyber Mentors' if anything inappropriate comes up and will instantly report their concerns.
- The school's learning mentor liaises very closely with parents and is always available to talk with parents about any safety concerns they may have.
- Many visitors come into the school to talk with pupils, for example, about fire safety and the importance of good behaviour and sticking to the rules. Circle time and personal, social, health and citizenship education help pupils to understand the dangers and risks, as well as their rights and responsibilities.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leaders have effectively improved the school to its current position. The rapid improvement in attainment this year, especially in mathematics, is a notable achievement. This is also the case for the improved quality of teaching and the excellent care, guidance and support offered to Year 6 pupils ahead of their end-of-year tests.
- Relationships between the school and the community are excellent. Parents trust the school and know that it will help them to access a broad range of services if they need any kind of help.
- Middle managers, including subject leaders, are very effective. They have a clear role in improving both teaching and standards. They regularly observe teachers and check the quality of marking. However, they have not ensured that the best marking is fully shared across the school.
- Teachers have to reach challenging targets before they can apply for promotion or pay increases. These targets are identified as part of the appraisal process and are closely linked to the school's plans to improve pupils' achievement.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils enjoy participating in assemblies, visits to places of worship, including the Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral and a local synagogue, and learning about Hinduism and Islam. Pupils enjoy visiting theatres and playing musical instruments, such as the violin. All year groups learn Spanish, which is exceptionally well taught.
- Pupils benefit from a rich curriculum. They enjoy learning, for example, about the life of the French artist Paul Cezanne in Year 2, how seeds grow in science in Year 3 and using computer software to create their own music in Year 6. Pupils are especially fond of the residential trips in Years 2, 3 and 6.
- Governors and senior leaders ensure that the primary school sports fund is well spent. They have enlisted the support of specialist sports services to help to improve the quality of physical education teaching. They have also sought to widen the range of sporting opportunities available, to include tag-rugby, netball and athletics.
- The school has worked with a number of specialists who have helped, for example, to improve the quality of the teaching of mathematics. The support provided by the local authority has been particularly effective in improving attendance and the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Safeguarding procedures are followed closely and meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know exactly where their school's strengths lie and check that funds are spent well to enrich the lives of pupils and provide them with a safe, and well presented school. Inspection evidence confirms that they do this successfully. Governors know how well the school's performance compares with other schools.
 - Governors know that the quality of teaching is good because they come into school to see for themselves. They only authorise pay increases when it can be demonstrated that they are warranted. They hold senior leaders to account for the standards they have set for pupils.
 - Governors keep themselves abreast of developments in education through regular training and know that the pupil premium funding is spent well to raise standards and provide support for eligible pupils. They know less about how the primary sports fund is used and its impact.

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	111391
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	444302

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	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Finney
Headteacher	Karl Landrum
Date of previous school inspection	28 April 2010
Telephone number	0151 4242879
Fax number	0151 4244461
Email address	head.stgerards@halton.gov.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', 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 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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 and 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 123 4234, 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 information 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'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

