

# St Gregory's Catholic Academy

Ragpath Lane, Stockton-on-Tees, County Durham, TS19 9AD

**Inspection dates** 11–12 March 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The quality of teaching has not been consistently good over time. This has meant that pupils have made less progress than found nationally, particularly in English and mathematics.
- As a result, standards at the end of Year 6 in 2014 were well below average in reading and mathematics and below average in writing. Not many pupils reached above average standards.
- While the vast majority of pupils in Year 2 reached average standards, not enough of the most able attained higher than this.
- Teaching requires improvement. Sometimes the work set is either too easy or too difficult for pupils.
- Teachers do not provide regular enough opportunities for pupils to correct or improve their work for themselves so that they make more rapid progress.
- There are missed opportunities to write and record work in pupils' topic books.
- Children are not making rapid enough progress in early years. As a result, only about half of children have the literacy and number skills they need to make a good start in Year 1. This is because the staff's expectations of reception-aged children are too low and the activities that are planned for them do not have a clear enough focus on learning.
- The outdoor area in early years does not allow children to experience a wide range of rich and inspiring activities.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy school, work hard in lessons and have positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and the school has excellent systems to help keep them safe in school.
- Children make good progress in the Nursery class because the quality of teaching is good.
- Standards are rising quickly. Pupils' work in English and mathematics is now of a good standard in both Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Leaders, directors of the trust and governors are ambitious, courageous and determined. They know exactly what they need to do to improve and have begun to make rapid progress towards improving standards, attendance and the quality of teaching.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons and checked the quality of pupils' work. Some of these activities were carried out jointly with the head of school and senior leaders from the trust.
- Inspectors talked to pupils at break and dinner times, and heard others in Years 1, 2 and 6 read.
- The views of 34 parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View), as well as those spoken to during the inspection, were taken into account.
- Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, teachers, members of the governing body and directors from the trust.
- The school's improvement plan and records of pupils' achievement, as well as records of the quality of teaching, pupils' behaviour and safeguarding were examined.
- Twenty-six staff submitted their views via a questionnaire and inspectors took these into account.

## Inspection team

Christine Cottam, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Dominic Brown

Additional Inspector

Barbara Hudson

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St. Gregory's Catholic Academy is a similar size to the average-sized primary school.
- St. Gregory's Catholic Academy converted to become an academy school on 1 April 2013. When its predecessor school, St. Gregory's Roman Catholic Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be satisfactory overall.
- St. Gregory's is a member of Carmel Academy Trust. The trust is governed by a board of directors. St. Gregory's Catholic Academy has its own local governing body. The Chair of Governors is one of the directors of the trust. The performance of the head of school is managed by directors of the trust rather than the governing body.
- The acting head of school has been in post since January 2015.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium, is higher than the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding the school receives for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is higher than that found nationally.
- Early years provision is part time in the Nursery and full time in the Reception Year.
- The school does not meet the current floor standard, which is the government's minimum expectation for attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The school has gained a number of awards, most recently a silver 'Eco-School' award and 'Artsmark'.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better in all year groups by:
  - ensuring the work set is at the right level of difficulty for different groups of pupils
  - making sure teachers consistently provide opportunities for pupils to correct or improve their work after it has been marked.
- Ensure pupils make faster progress so that a higher proportion meet or exceed the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of each key stage. In particular, make sure that:
  - the most able pupils are given activities and work that challenge their thinking so that they can reach even higher levels
  - all pupils are given more consistent opportunities to record their work in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Improve provision for the older children in early years so that the good progress seen in the Nursery continues throughout Reception by:
  - planning activities that have a clearer focus on learning
  - assessing children's progress regularly and using that information to make sure the curriculum meets their needs
  - having higher expectations of how much children can achieve.
- Develop the outdoor learning area in the early years to enable children to have access to a wider range of stimulating activities, so that they are eager to explore and learn.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- All who work in and with the school say there is now a shared belief that pupils can and should achieve. Leaders at all levels now expect high standards of performance. As a result, teaching is improving and standards are rising.
- Leaders and directors of the trust, governors and school staff, have high levels of confidence in the leadership of the acting head of school. She has quickly established high expectations of staff while providing effective support that is ensuring the quality of teaching is improving. All who work in the school share her commitment to ensure pupils achieve well.
- Leaders at all levels are relentless in their approach to checking the quality of teaching. Recent improvements now leave teachers in no doubt as to what they must do to improve. Good teaching is recognised and rewarded and underperformance is tackled by providing extra support. The systems for managing the quality of teaching, as laid down by the trust, are rigorous in holding teachers to account for their performance. As a result teaching is improving and is now showing more good features than it has been over recent times.
- Leaders now keep a constant eye on pupils' progress. They do this by making sure that the attainment of every pupil is tracked carefully and by checking the quality of work in pupils' books regularly. Consequently, almost all pupils are now making better progress than before in most classes in the school. Where this is not yet the case, then further action is being taken to secure good progress.
- Middle leaders are now much more involved in checking the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. They are capable, ambitious and enthusiastic. Teachers value the feedback they receive from middle leaders because it is helping them to improve.
- The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school is preparing pupils well for life in modern Britain, in particular in the way in which it promotes tolerance and respect. Pupils enjoy the creative way some of their subjects are taught, for example cooking Egyptian food. There is not enough work in pupils' topic books, however, to show whether they are studying subjects other than English and mathematics in any depth or often enough.
- The school is a caring, safe environment where safeguarding meets statutory requirements.
- Leaders are now using pupil premium funding well to ensure eligible pupils now make good progress. In the past their achievements were lower than other pupils in the school. There is currently very little difference between the achievements of different groups of pupils and this reflects leaders' approach to ensuring equality and preventing discrimination.
- The primary school sports funding has been used effectively to widen the range of sports on offer. For example, older pupils now have opportunities to participate in rugby, hockey and orienteering. Funding has also been used to secure specialist teaching and provide support for class teachers in order to ensure high quality teaching.
- The trust provides good support to the school. Leaders and directors of the trust have high expectations while at the same time providing effective support to the new acting head of school. For example, the head of standards from the trust is involved in checking the quality of teaching alongside school leaders. Together, they are ensuring teaching improves and pupil progress is speeding up.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Directors and governors have a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, including a good understanding of teachers' performance. This is because they receive regular reports from senior leaders and also visit the school to check for themselves, for example by talking to pupils and visiting classrooms.
  - Directors and governors have a good understanding of data about pupils' achievement. They ask challenging questions about pupil progress and have a good understanding of what needs to improve.
  - Directors manage finances well so that the improvement priorities of the school are met. For example, the new parent partnership adviser is having a marked effect on communication with parents, as well as helping to keep potentially vulnerable pupils safe.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

#### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils thrive in an atmosphere where there are high levels of tolerance

and respect. As a result they are polite and well mannered towards adults and one another. Rules, routines and rewards are used well to encourage the very best behaviour from all pupils.

- Behaviour in lessons is almost always good and sometimes better. Pupils have an extremely positive attitude and want to learn. They work hard in lessons and take great pride in the quality of work in their mathematics and English books, which is beautifully presented.
- Instances of poor behaviour, racism or bullying are rare. Any that do occur are dealt with quickly and effectively. There have been no pupils excluded during the current or previous school year.
- Pupils also behave well at play and lunchtimes. They cooperate with one another and share equipment well. Some older pupils are playground leaders. They play alongside younger pupils, help them at lunchtimes and provide support for any who lack confidence.
- Pupils are given other opportunities to take additional responsibility. For example, some are 'Eco-Warriors' and were instrumental in helping the school to gain an award for this work.
- Attendance has been below average over time. The school has appointed an attendance officer who is working closely with families. As a result, current attendance has improved and is now average. Persistent absence has reduced significantly.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe, because they are taught well how to manage risks for themselves. For example, the school provides workshops for parents and pupils to improve their understanding of internet safety.
- Pupils say they feel happy and safe at school. The vast majority of parents agree that their children are safe and happy.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different forms of bullying, for example racism. They know what they need to do to stay safe and are confident that adults in the school will help to protect them.

### The quality of teaching

#### requires improvement

- The quality of teaching over time has not been good enough to ensure pupils make sufficient progress in reading, writing and mathematics as they move through the school. As a result, standards have been lower than they should have been.
- While teaching has improved and much is now good, it is not yet consistently so in all year groups. Where teaching requires improvement it is sometimes because the most able pupils are set work that is not challenging enough for them or the work is too difficult for some pupils.
- Teachers do not always expect pupils to record enough of their work for themselves. This is particularly the case in topic work where there is a lack of work in many pupils' books and missed opportunities to use skills of writing.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge, especially in English and mathematics. They plan activities that inspire pupils so that they want to learn. When pupils were asked what the best thing about the school is, they replied, 'the teachers, because they give us interesting work to do'.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and manage it well. As a result, pupils listen well and work hard. Learning is rarely interrupted by poor behaviour.
- Teachers also have high expectations of the quantity and quality of pupils' work in English and mathematics books. Consequently pupils almost always take pride in their work and complete it neatly and to a high standard.
- The quality of marking is consistently good across the academy. Teachers tell pupils what they must do to improve their work. While there are some examples of pupils responding meaningfully to this marking, it is not consistently the case. For example, Year 5 pupils are expected to correct and improve their work every morning and the teacher helps them to do this and checks they have done so properly and accurately. This good practice helps pupils to make more rapid progress.
- Teaching assistants are often deployed effectively. For example many teach small groups of pupils who need extra support.

### The achievement of pupils

#### requires improvement

- Standards at the end of Year 6 have been below average for two years. Attainment dipped below the government's floor standard in 2014, with only half of pupils reaching the expected Level 4 in reading,

writing and mathematics combined. As a result, half of pupils were not prepared well for their start in secondary school.

- Children do not make enough progress in early years, particularly in their reading, writing and number skills. This means that less than half of children have the skills they need to make a good start in Year 1.
- Not enough of the most able pupils are reaching above average standards at the end of each key stage. This is because the work they are set is not always challenging enough for them.
- The quality of teaching has improved rapidly so that learning and progress in lessons are now usually good. Work in pupils' books shows they are making good progress in the current year so that they are now catching up. As a result, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics, is now much closer to the national average.
- Leaders and teachers have focused strongly on improving pupils' English and mathematics skills. As a result, the quality and quantity of work in pupils' books in those subjects are now strengths of the school. Pupils' writing is detailed, well organised, interesting, and neatly presented. In contrast, there is not enough work recorded in pupils' topic books.
- Pupils are now making good progress from low starting points to reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2, although not enough pupils are reaching above average levels.
- Pupils enjoy reading and are now reading regularly at school and home. Pupils in Year 1 use their knowledge of letters and sounds (phonics) to read simple books. Results in the Year 1 phonics check have improved and are now above average. Year 1 pupils do not have the variety of skills needed to help them read or understand more complex texts. However, Year 2 pupils are making good progress in reading to reach average standards for their age.
- Pupils in Year 6 read fluently and accurately for their age. They enjoy reading a range of books by different authors.
- Pupils are now making good progress in mathematics. The school has introduced a whole range of initiatives to improve pupils' mental and written skills of calculation, as well as their ability to solve mathematical problems. These are having a good impact on learning and progress in mathematics so that standards are rising and are now average.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils is at least as good as, and sometimes better than, others in the school, especially in reading and writing. The gap has closed completely over time. The gap has also narrowed in mathematics, although disadvantaged pupils are about a term behind others in the school in this subject. However, both disadvantaged pupils and those who are not did much less well than non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. This is because staff help them very well in lessons.

### The early years provision

### requires improvement

- While children get off to a flying start in nursery and make good progress, this is not sustained throughout the Reception Year. Not enough children acquire the skills they need, particularly in reading, writing and number, to make a good start in Year 1. Therefore achievement in early years requires improvement.
- The quality of teaching in the Reception class requires improvement. While a variety of activities are offered, it is not always clear what children are expected to learn from these activities. Expectations of what children can achieve are sometimes too low. For example, much of the work in writing is informal 'mark-making' with not enough opportunities for children to write simple words and sentences that are more recognisable. This means they have not made enough progress in writing over time.
- The quality of teaching in the Nursery is consistently good. Activities are purposeful and interesting so that children make good progress in a wide range of skills. For example, one boy was tremendously excited by the work about 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. He said, 'We are going to climb a mountain, do you want to come?'
- Children develop good social skills in early years so that their behaviour is good. For example, children sang about sharing and taking turns. They enjoyed doing this with cuddly toys and this helped to reinforce their understanding at the same time as developing a sense of rhythm in music.
- The early years leader has a good knowledge of the achievements of children. There have been significant improvements in outcomes recently so that about three quarters of children are expected to acquire the skills they need by the end of this year.
- Leaders are aware that the outdoor area does not fully meet the needs of the curriculum and have plans

in place to update this.

- Parents are unanimously happy with provision. They are pleased with how well their children have settled into school and appreciate the approachability of staff.
- There are good systems in place to keep children safe.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139492
<b>Local authority</b>	Stockton-on-Tees
<b>Inspection number</b>	449938

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	282
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Pat McTimoney
<b>Headteacher</b>	Fiona Stokeld (Acting headteacher)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected as an academy
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