

St Gregory's RC Primary School

Presto Street, Farnworth, Bolton, Lancashire BL4 8AJ

Inspection dates

19–20 April 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Not enough pupils, notably boys, achieve a good level of development by the time they leave the early years foundation stage.
- A legacy of underachievement has contributed to pupils leaving the school with standards below those found nationally.
- Standards of writing for too many pupils are weak and less able pupils do not get enough help with letter formation and basic sentence writing.
- There is not enough good teaching in Years 2 and 4 and in the early years.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is improving but the school's marking policy is not always adhered to.
- The attendance and achievement of boys and disadvantaged pupils are lower than that of their peers.
- A small minority of pupils do not always behave well in lessons and interrupt the learning of others.
- A few pupils and parents rightly feel that bullying is not always dealt with effectively.
- Some school policies and procedures are too vague, particularly around anti-bullying and safety.
- Governors do not challenge senior leaders robustly enough over the standards pupils achieve.
- School improvement planning and self-evaluation are too imprecise.

The school has the following strengths

- Parents say, and inspectors agree, that the school has improved remarkably since the arrival of the executive headteacher.
- There is strong leadership of behaviour and special educational needs.
- Senior leaders and governors have used performance management well to tackle inadequate teaching.
- The curriculum has been strengthened by the introduction of 'family time', team-building and expert sports coaching.
- Facilities have improved and children are making the most of the new play areas.
- Some strong teaching and intervention work are helping pupils catch up in their learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching, particularly in Years 2 and 4 and the early years foundation stage by:
 - ensuring that all pupils, particularly those who find learning difficult, are well supported to make good progress
 - building on good practice to engage boys
 - checking that the school’s marking policy is adhered to.

- Accelerate progress, particularly for boys, in key stage 1 and in writing, so that pupils achieve standards at least in line with national expectations.

- Build on improvements in behaviour by:
 - insisting on the highest standards of behaviour in all classes and at social times
 - improving attendance for boys and disadvantaged pupils
 - raising the profile of anti-bullying work.

- Further strengthen leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that policies and procedures reflect current practice
 - sharpening the school improvement plan and self-evaluation
 - ensuring that governors challenge senior leaders more rigorously on the standards that pupils achieve.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management are not yet good because pupils do not achieve well enough. Attendance has not improved and policies and procedures and the way governors hold senior leaders to account about pupils' achievement need to be strengthened.
- Self-evaluation and school improvement planning do not set out clearly enough for staff and governors exactly where standards are and when they can expect to see improvements.
- However, parents say, and inspectors agree, that the executive headteacher has brought about swift improvements since he was appointed two terms ago. Expectations have been raised. One of his top priorities has been to improve behaviour, and improvements can be seen. One parent commented: 'I feel that St Gregory's has turned around over the past few months. It is now a stable, happy place which I hope will continue to improve'.
- Performance management has been used well to tackle teaching that is not good enough. However, this has created new challenges for senior leaders and governors as they have had to cover long-term sickness absences.
- The deputy headteacher has led the school through a time of considerable upheaval. She has ensured that pupil premium funding has been well spent in supporting pupils' well-being and learning through extra staffing and enriching the curriculum. This is having an impact as gaps in performance between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in school and nationally are beginning to narrow.
- The assistant headteacher responsible for behaviour and pupils who have special educational needs or disability is highly ambitious for all pupils. She has, through the diligent building of relationships with parents and carers, made great strides with individual pupils who, until recently, rarely attended school. She has reduced exclusions for other individuals due to high-level multi-agency work.
- In some classes, such as Year 1, the curriculum is vibrant and engaging, resulting in strong progress for all pupils. However, in some other classes, for example Year 4, the interpretation of the curriculum is narrow and uninspiring; pupils become bored and disengaged.
- The curriculum is enriched by motivational team-building, practical activities and expert sports coaching. The sports premium funding has been well spent in this respect. Pupils develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness appropriately through events such as World Book Day when they read 'The day the crayons quit', and reflected on accepting people who are different and the richness of the school community. Extra-curricular activities are being developed including the Football Association helping to develop girls' football.
- **The governance of the school**
 - In response to the review of governance, governors have restructured and established a committee to focus on the standards achieved by pupils. However, they still do not hold senior leaders to account rigorously enough regarding the standards pupils achieve.
 - Governors were pivotal in the appointment of the executive headteacher as they rightly recognised that the pace of improvements was not quick enough. Governors have repeatedly tried over the past two years to appoint a headteacher. They are very clear about the strength of leadership needed to move the school forward and until very recently they did not feel they could appoint.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Although there are logs for bullying and clear records for child protection, multiple records are kept by different individuals, which makes it more difficult for senior leaders and governors to keep an overview of actions and improvements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- There is a body of teaching that fails to engage pupils, particularly boys, disadvantaged pupils, those with English as an additional language and those who have special educational needs or disability. This is because insufficient focus is given to how best to support pupils who need more structure and guidance in order to write and read well, and results in a few pupils saying that they do not enjoy coming to school.

- The quality of teaching is weaker in Years 2 and 4. In Year 2, inspectors observed some pupils making little progress in English because there was insufficient structure for pupils who find writing difficult. Phonic knowledge is not applied or reinforced, so words are spelled incorrectly. Similarly, there is confusion over the teaching of handwriting as some pupils write in cursive script while others print. The most-able pupils are not always stretched in their learning and opportunities to allow them to extend their thoughts and ideas are missed.
- Scrutiny of Year 4 science books shows that standards in writing are weak. Work is marked as 'good' when it is poorly presented and littered with spelling errors. Boys whose handwriting is weak are given no structure to help them write words properly or spell correctly.
- By contrast, the teaching in Year 1 is typified by vigour and enthusiasm which permeates through the entire class. The atmosphere in the classroom is positive and inclusive. Teaching assistants are well briefed due to the teacher being very well organised. Inspectors observed pupils making rapid progress in mathematics as they recalled multiples of two and five with ease and went on to apply the numbers in different contexts, for example 'five pence'.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read confidently and with great expression in Year 6. They showed excellent comprehension of the books they were reading. A wider scrutiny of reading records showed that the vast majority of pupils read regularly and are now making much better progress in reading.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Almost all pupils spoken to by inspectors feel safe in school. However, a few reported that they had been subject to derogatory language and other forms of bullying. Some parents feel that bullying is not dealt with as effectively as it could be. Policies do not tell parents what they should do if they are concerned that their child is being bullied.
- Long-term staff absences and lots of staff changes have unsettled many pupils. Despite this, many staff and pupils remain very loyal to their school as they can see improvements happening and really want it to be a good school again.
- 'The cube' is a new area where pupils can go if they need to calm down or to receive help with social and emotional issues. This is reducing the amount of disruption in lessons, thus improving the well-being of the majority of pupils.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Attendance has not improved since the previous inspection; it remains below average overall and lower for boys and disadvantaged pupils. Opportunities are missed to use the expertise of staff such as learning mentors to focus on raising attendance.
- Behaviour observed during the inspection was mixed. The majority of pupils are polite, sensible and very well behaved. However, some pupils lose interest in their learning and misbehave in class. Records of exclusions show that there are still some serious incidents of poor behaviour, and fixed-term exclusions remain high.
- At break- and lunchtimes, the yard is well supervised by adults who are highly visible. The vast majority of pupils play sensibly, but a few do not follow instructions and do not show the appropriate respect to adults when reprimanded.
- A new reward system is in place and is having an impact. However, some pupils are unsure whether they have been awarded a merit point because they are simply logged on the computer; there is nothing visual for them to see.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Pupils do not make good progress because expectations in some classes are too low and there is a legacy of underachievement. Not enough care is taken to ensure that groups of pupils with particular needs are well catered for and this prevents them from making good progress.
- Boys achieve less well than girls because they are less engaged in their learning, and have lower attendance and higher exclusions.
- Standards achieved by the end of key stages 1 and 2 remain below the national average. The school is predicting a slight improvement in results for this year. Pupils are making better progress due to some improvements in teaching and intervention to fill gaps in knowledge, without which pupils cannot move on in their learning.
- Progress in writing and phonics is not good enough. Although some pupils are making good progress in writing, there are too many who cannot form letters correctly or spell well by applying their phonics knowledge. Opportunities are missed for teachers to set pupils up to succeed when they put pen to paper.
- Pupils are making better progress in mathematics due to better quality teaching in this subject.
- Similarly, the progress of pupils who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs or disability is improving as greater focus is given to their provision.
- Not enough focus is given to helping the small number of pupils who have English as an additional language to access the curriculum fully. Some of these pupils have recently arrived at the school and have very little command of English.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- There is a mixture of abilities on entry to the school. Some children have abilities typical for their age, others are well below age-related expectations, and some arrive with very little knowledge of English.
- Children do not make enough progress during their time in Reception, and a minority, mainly boys, leave Reception without the necessary skills to succeed in Year 1.
- Time is wasted on poorly planned provision when some children do not have the ability to form letters or sound out words. Provision is particularly weak for children for whom English is an additional language.
- Although a lot of money has been spent on improving the outdoor area, parts of it remain unkempt and unsuitable. There is insufficient planning to consider children's safety, and staff are not always deployed to best effect. There are too many activities in a confined space with no direction for the children of what to do or how many of them may take part in an activity at the same time. Consequently, there is potential for accidents to happen as children cycle, run and throw things with little staff supervision.
- The teaching of reading and writing is not strong enough to allow the less able children to catch up. Inspectors observed children listening to the teacher reading a book to them. The pages of the book were displayed electronically on the wall. However, the text was too small for the children to read, so the opportunity to reinforce their phonics knowledge was entirely lost.
- The teaching of mathematics is better. A group of less able children were taught particularly well by a teaching assistant whose very calm and caring manner made the children eager to 'have a turn' even if they got the answer wrong. She used praise and rewards really well to motivate them.
- There are mixed views from parents. Some parents are unhappy with behaviour and others cannot praise the school enough for its inclusive approach.
- School leaders are acutely aware that further improvements need to be made in the early years provision. They are monitoring closely the day-to-day quality of teaching and plans are in place to give greater focus to the children's behaviour and safety.

School details

Unique reference number	105244
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	10012155

This inspection 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	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sean Greenhalgh
Executive headteacher	Kevan Naughton
Telephone number	01204 332658
Website	www.st-gregorys.bolton.sch.uk
Email address	office@st-gregorys.bolton.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–27 June 2014

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government to support pupils who are eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language is low.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There are temporary members of teaching staff in Years 2 and 4.
- The deputy headteacher has been the acting headteacher since the previous inspection and until the recent appointment of the executive headteacher.
- An executive headteacher was appointed in June 2015. A substantive headteacher has been appointed and is due to take up post in September 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils in lessons and during social times. They scrutinised documentation pertaining to the curriculum, achievement, self-evaluation, performance management and school improvement. They looked at minutes of governing body meetings, financial information, current attendance and behaviour information, and documentation relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors held discussions with pupils, parents, members of the governing body, representatives from the local authority, senior leaders and subject leaders. They took account of 14 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.

Inspection team

Sally Kenyon, lead inspector

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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