

# St George's School A Church of England Academy

Cherry Tree Road, Marton, Blackpool, Lancashire FY4 4PH

## Inspection dates

16–17 November 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	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science is not yet good when compared with that of pupils nationally with the same starting points.
- The difference between the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally is not diminishing quickly enough.
- Some middle leaders do not routinely hold teachers sufficiently to account for the quality of teaching in their subject areas. Consequently pupils do not achieve as well as they should.
- Leaders do not have adequately robust information about how well current pupils are doing. Consequently, they do not pick up on pupils' underachievement.
- The leadership of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is weak.
- Leaders' ambition for academic excellence is not as apparent as their commitment to pastoral support. As a result, standards have not improved as quickly as they should have.
- Teaching is not good enough. Teachers do not use the information they have about pupils to plan work that is well matched to their abilities, especially for the most able.
- Teachers do not question pupils in sufficient depth. As a result, pupils' knowledge and understanding are not deepened.
- The school's new assessment system is not sufficiently well embedded to improve standards across the school.

### The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has a clear vision, drive and determination to move the school forward. He has quickly prioritised actions to improve pupils' learning and the quality of teaching.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils take on responsibilities, and show respect for each other and for the adults who work with them.
- The school's commitment to improving pupils' literacy skills is highly effective. Pupils now read widely and often.
- Attendance is good. Leaders have been particularly successful in raising the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.
- Children who are looked after make strong progress and achieve well.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
  - embedding the school's assessment system and using it effectively to improve standards
  - ensuring that teachers challenge pupils to achieve more and develop a thirst for learning
  - improving teachers' questioning skills so that pupils can develop a deeper understanding of the concepts being studied and apply that knowledge in a range of contexts.
- Improve outcomes by:
  - improving the progress pupils make in mathematics, science and English to at least match that of others nationally
  - improving the progress made by disadvantaged pupils, including those who are most-able.
- Improve leadership and management at all levels by:
  - ensuring that there is as strong a focus on developing academic excellence as there is on pastoral support
  - ensuring that leaders use the information they have about the quality of teaching to improve standards for pupils
  - ensuring that leaders know how well pupils are progressing and that they use this information to provide timely, appropriate and effective support
  - embedding the new robust systems introduced to improve practice across the school
  - addressing the shortfall in provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Leaders, including governors, have an over-generous view of the quality of education provided by the school. Leaders' actions to address the variation in pupils' achievement have not yet resulted in good outcomes for all groups of pupils. As a result, pupils do not make good progress across a range of subjects, including English, mathematics and science. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged.
- In 2015, leaders commissioned a review into the way they spend the additional funding from the government to support disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have plans in place to act upon the recommendations; however, actions are not backed up by clearly defined success criteria. As a result, teachers do not know what their contribution is to improving the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and how leaders will hold them to account for their work.
- Leaders do not have sufficiently robust information about how well current pupils are doing across the school and across subjects. For that reason, they cannot be sure that the information they have is accurate. Consequently, the extra support for pupils who are underachieving is not targeted well enough to help them catch up quickly.
- Leaders and staff take their role in supporting pupils' emotional and personal development seriously. Consequently, provision for pupils' well-being is strong. However, this drive is not matched in equal measure by their work to ensure that pupils enjoy academic success.
- The new headteacher has plans to improve teaching. The changes being made already show clear improvements in the quality of teaching. It is, however, too soon to see the impact of the changes on the standards pupils achieve, for example in English, where teaching is now good.
- The leadership of provision for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not good enough. Systems to check how well pupils are doing are not precise. As a result, leaders do not know how well pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are doing across the curriculum. Plans to improve this area lack rigour and the impact of the actions taken is not assessed accurately by leaders in this area.
- Standards in some subject areas are not as high as they should be. Some middle leaders do not rigorously hold teachers to account for the quality of teaching in their lessons. As a result, pupils' progress stalls.
- Despite their best efforts, leaders are unable to recruit enough teachers in science, English, mathematics and religious education. Consequently, some pupils are regularly taught by supply teachers. This has a negative impact on pupils' progress. As a result, standards are not yet consistently good in these subjects. To assist, teachers have large classes and move staff between classes so that the negative impact on learning can be minimised. This increases their workload. The situation is frustrating for teachers, leaders, governors, parents, and, most of all, pupils.

- The trust recognises that standards in the school need to improve. It is working closely with the headteacher, offering full support, rigorous challenge and access to the required training for leaders and staff.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders regularly review the curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs and interests of pupils. Extra-curricular provision is excellent. Staff give their time generously. There are new initiatives to engage pupils and develop their resilience in learning, such as mental toughness training. Pupils value the extra revision sessions and activities on offer. Leaders track participation to ensure that pupils attend regularly and all have equal access to what is on offer.
- New leaders have been appointed recently in English and science. They know that they need to ensure consistently high-quality teaching to improve standards. Leaders are working closely with senior leaders to change past underachievement. Across the school, leaders are implementing plans for raising attainment. It is, however, too early to see the impact of these actions.
- The new headteacher understands that the school is not as good as it should be. He is assiduously bringing about change. He has a clear vision to improve the quality of education and he has a sharp focus on improving the quality of teaching. He has taken immediate action to implement new ongoing training programmes for teachers, for example, in 'evidence-informed teaching' and new approaches to planning effective lessons. This is beginning to make a difference to pupils' progress and achievement. Nonetheless, it is still too early to see the difference made to the legacy of underachievement.
- The trust, governors and staff have every confidence in the headteacher and his capacity to make the changes needed at the school. Parents are extremely positive about his leadership.
- The headteacher, with the support of the trust, continues to revise the staffing structure. As a result of careful evaluation and planning, the school's finances are now much more secure.
- The behaviour, attendance and progress of pupils who study at alternative providers are closely monitored. These pupils are safe and the programmes they study are well matched to their individual needs.
- The school's procedures for performance management are secure. Where teachers do not meet the teachers' standards, pay increases are not awarded.
- Pupils' development of literacy skills is good. Leaders have effective strategies in place to overcome lower-than-average standards of literacy on entry. Consequently, the use of additional funding to support pupils' literacy development is effective.
- Leaders promote equality at every opportunity. The school is harmonious and pupils relate well with each other. Pupils are positive about how well the school teaches respect, diversity and tolerance. Staff value the respect that pupils show them.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of the highest quality. The school chaplain helps to support a wide range of pupils through a variety of issues. Pupils commit to supporting charities. Leaders have programmes to develop pupils' resilience for life. The school's mission for all pupils to 'believe, achieve and care' is underpinned by the 15 'gifts'; these are Christian values to guide pupils through their

lives.

- Leaders demonstrate good capacity to improve the school. They are acutely aware of the changes needed to ensure that the school provides a good quality of education for its pupils.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governors have an over-generous view of the quality of education provided by the school because, until recently, they have not questioned leaders stringently enough. As a result, they have not ensured that pupils make sufficiently good progress across a range of subjects, in particular mathematics, English and science.
- Governors do not give enough attention to academic excellence. There is an over-emphasis on pastoral care in comparison with pursuing scholastic excellence.
- Governors, until lately, have not asked sufficiently challenging questions about the impact of the extra funding from the government to support disadvantaged pupils. As a result, disadvantaged pupils do not make progress that is similar to that of other pupils nationally. More recently, a governor has taken responsibility for the progress of disadvantaged pupils and is beginning to hold leaders to account. There is now challenge and accountability for how money is spent.
- There are robust recruitment procedures in place to recruit new governors. The chief executive of the Cidari Multi-Academy Trust appoints the chair of the governing committee following a rigorous interview and selection process. A new chair of governors is now in office. He is clear that the school needs to improve.
- The governing committee is passionate about improving the standards achieved by pupils at St George's School. Governors now undergo routine training, provided by the trust, to ensure that they have the skills required to hold leaders to account for standards in the school. The trust has recently reviewed the skills and expertise of the governors and now they are better equipped to carry out their duties and offer appropriate support and challenge.
- Governors are effective in carrying out their statutory safeguarding duties. This is a significant strength.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The leadership of safeguarding is highly effective, and systems to protect pupils from harm are secure. The link governor to the safeguarding team is knowledgeable and keeps a check on the effectiveness and efficiency of policy and procedure by asking probing questions. Leaders have meticulous records of the work they have done with pupils. As a result, pupils are safe.
- Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding training is rigorous and frequent. Staff have the opportunity to contribute to this training and inform school policy. As a result, staff know and recognise the signs of abuse. They understand their role in dealing with incidents of 'sexting' or spotting potential signs of radicalisation. Leaders' work with external agencies ensures that pupils at risk get the help they need. They are well supported by the wealth of experience across the multi-academy trust; the chief executive is an ambassador for the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre. For

these reasons, parents believe that the school keeps their children safe.

- The teaching of online safety is a strength. Pupils are protected well by the school's internet filtering systems. There is a wide range of information available on the school's website to help pupils stay safe. Parents also have access to a range of resources to help them to understand how to keep children safe. Online safety is taught across the curriculum. As a result, pupils can articulate the dangers of technology; they know how to stay safe.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is variable. Teachers do not routinely use the information they have about their pupils to ensure that work is well matched to their starting points. As a result, pupils do not make as much progress as they should. This is especially the case for the most able, who are sometimes under-challenged, and for the least able, who often require more support.
- Teachers do not always have high enough aspirations of what their pupils can achieve. As a result, lessons do not always stretch and challenge pupils to excel. This is especially the case in mathematics.
- Some teachers do not give pupils sufficient opportunity to develop their extended writing skills. Consequently, some of the least able pupils' skills are underdeveloped for their age.
- Teachers do not always give feedback in line with the school's assessment policy. As a result, some pupils get all their work correct but are not challenged to take the next steps in their learning. Where pupils give each other feedback, often it lacks precision, and therefore it does not deepen their knowledge or help them to improve.
- Pupils do not correct their work enough through the school's dedicated improvement and reflection time. This means that pupils sometimes have incorrect work in their books. This hinders pupils' revision for assessments and examinations.
- Teachers' questioning is inconsistent in quality. Where it is strong, it stretches pupils to explain their answers more fully, using appropriate subject-specific terminology. Where it is weak, teachers do not think carefully about how their questioning skills could challenge pupils to demonstrate more secure knowledge, skills and understanding. This leads to pupils' progress slowing.
- Although leaders are strengthening teaching through ongoing staff training, there are still too many unfilled posts. These vacancies have a negative impact on pupils' experiences and hinder their learning and progress.
- Teachers have a secure subject knowledge for the age groups they teach. Nevertheless, they do not always use that knowledge to stretch and challenge pupils to think in greater depth. For this reason, pupils do not always progress as quickly as they should.
- Teachers are committed to improving their practice. At the request of the headteacher, some teachers have taken on additional voluntary responsibility to help improve the quality of teaching. They do this through planning lessons together, sharing best practice and through undertaking research into different teaching methods.

Consequently, there is good staff morale and a strong sense of team spirit.

- Where teachers successfully stimulate pupils' thinking, pupils do well. Teaching is particularly strong in physical education, modern foreign languages and technology.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. They are keen to learn and most listen attentively to their teachers and complete work diligently. There are effective routines in place. Nonetheless, in some subjects, pupils are insufficiently inspired by teachers to develop a love of learning.
- The quality of presentation in pupils' books is generally good. Pupils want to make good progress and for the most part are committed to doing well. Pupils typically complete the work their teachers set to a high standard.
- Teachers routinely set appropriate homework. Pupils value this additional work because they understand that it helps them to consolidate their learning. Parents feel that pupils receive appropriate homework.
- Teachers are effective in promoting diversity. They challenge stereotypes. There is a culture of respect across the school which ensures that all pupils are equally valued. Pupils are not afraid to make contributions in lessons. All pupils' responses are listened to with equal respect.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are genuinely proud to attend their school and they wear their uniform with pride. Pupils have the opportunity to undertake numerous leadership roles; for example, they sit on the college council. As a result, pupils know that their voice is valued by teachers and leaders, including governors.
- Assemblies and form time are used well to promote an understanding of Christian values. During form time, pupils complete activities to promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils know a lot about other religions and display tolerance and respect. They know right from wrong. For these reasons, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils, including those who attend alternative provision, are safe. Staff at St George's work tirelessly to protect their pupils. Parents are proud that the school looks after its pupils so well. There are no spaces that are unsafe in the school. Pupils are trusted to be in the building during break- and lunchtime and they treat it with the utmost respect. Bullying is uncommon in the school. There are bullying ambassadors who support pupils with anxieties or worries. A school assembly on anti-bullying made pupils think deeply, reflect and empathise with all those involved in such incidents.
- Pupils are taught to be accepting of each other. Pupils told inspectors that they welcome pupils from different cultures and those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or gender fluid. Governors and leaders promote equality at every opportunity. Consequently, pupils feel valued and safe and they know the value of human worth.
- Pupils receive good careers education, information, advice and guidance at St George's

School. However, pupils would like links to careers to be made more explicit in their curriculum areas, for example, mathematics, and inspectors agree. There is a programme of university visits, a Cambridge University tour, careers evenings and a careers library. Only one pupil last year did not progress to education, employment or training.

- Although pupils' personal development is good, they are not as well prepared for the next stages of their education as they should be. This is because pupils do not yet make the progress of which they are capable, and therefore the full range of academic opportunities is not available to them.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is good. Pupils are courteous, polite and willing to engage in conversation with adults. There is no litter or graffiti around the site because pupils respect their environment.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning. Leaders have strong systems in place to help pupils who experience difficulties, so that the school can intervene and offer tailored support. Consequently, exclusions are declining over time.
- Pupils attend school regularly. Attendance continues to be in line with the national average and is a strength of the school. In particular, leaders' work to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is a success. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school is also in decline.
- The school's 'achievement for all' programme is successful. It engages more families in pupils' education. It supports parents to help their children make good progress and breaks down barriers that may prevent pupils from doing well. The programme's success means that it is being extended to even more families. The school is at the leading edge of this initiative and is helping other schools to establish similar projects.
- While most pupils have good attitudes to learning, these are not yet excellent because pupils are not sufficiently challenged by their teachers to achieve their very best. There are some minor incidents of low-level disruption in a minority of lessons.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- The progress made by pupils across key stages and across subjects is not yet consistently good. Over time, pupils have not made strong enough progress in mathematics, English or science. The school's own information does not convincingly show that the trend is likely to change this year for Year 11 pupils. However, there are positive improvements in key stage 3, especially in English.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils is not good enough. The difference in the progress made between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally is not diminishing quickly enough. Some most-able disadvantaged pupils also underachieve. This is especially the case in English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are underachieving. They are not receiving the support they need to excel. On average, they are achieving one grade lower than is expected. Leaders in this area are unclear about the progress their



pupils are making.

- The least able pupils are not making as much progress as they should. This is because some teachers are not planning effectively to support least-able pupils' progress. In 2016, the progress made by the least able was not good enough.
- Although in 2016 progress for the most able was broadly average, this group of pupils can and should make more progress. Pupils' work over time shows that they are under-challenged in lessons because teachers are not tailoring activities to stretch their knowledge, skills and understanding. As a result, they do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders and teachers encourage pupils to read widely and often. The school library is a fantastic resource in which pupils can lose themselves in a book. Authors regularly visit the school. Reading sessions enable pupils to make strong progress. Pupils at St George's can articulate which authors they like, what they are currently reading and describe effectively the characters in the story. Least-able pupils found the decoding of unfamiliar words more difficult.
- Under the guidance of the new headteacher, leaders' swift actions to address historic underachievement in the school have not yet had time to show sufficient impact. Consequently, the standards reached by current pupils are not yet good but they are improving.
- Children who are looked after make excellent progress in relation to their starting points. The school has a significant number of children who are looked after in comparison with the national average. The care, guidance and support they receive are outstanding. This enables them to quickly develop in confidence, build resilience and begin a journey of success. Consequently, many more of these children achieve grades A\* to C at GCSE, including in English and mathematics, than is seen nationally. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- In relation to their starting points, pupils' attainment is improving every year. In 2016, more pupils achieved grades A\* to C at GCSE in English and mathematics than in previous years.
- In key stage 3, pupils are making better progress, especially in Year 7 and in Year 8. Leaders' commitment to improving pupils' literacy skills is reaping benefits. There is a rigorous and coherent approach to improving the literacy skills of those pupils who enter the school below national expectations.

## School details

Unique reference number	140759
Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	10024120

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,004
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Angus MacLeod
Headteacher	Graham Warnock
Telephone number	01253 316725
Website	<a href="http://stgeorgesblackpool.com">http://stgeorgesblackpool.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:enquiries@stgeorgesblackpool.co.uk">enquiries@stgeorgesblackpool.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy

## Information about this school

- St George's School is an average-sized Church of England school in Blackpool.
- It is a member of the Cidari Multi-Academy Trust, which is part of the Blackburn diocese.
- The proportion of pupils known to be disadvantaged and therefore supported through the pupil premium funding is above average.
- The proportion of children who are looked after by the local authority is well above average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.

- A small number of pupils are educated off site at Chrysalis, Athena and Myerscough College.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of key stage 4.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with DfE guidance on what academies should publish

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in a range lessons across the school. Several observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also observed an assembly and form time across the school.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons. In addition, an in-depth analysis of work was conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors and leaders focused on the work of disadvantaged pupils. They also jointly assessed pupils' work in science, mathematics and English. The work produced by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was also scrutinised.
- Observations of pupils' behaviour and conduct were undertaken before the start of the school day, between lessons, at breaktime, at lunchtime and at the end of the school day. Inspectors also met formally with four groups of pupils and spoke to many more pupils informally during the inspection.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers, newly qualified and recently qualified teachers, staff responsible for the progress of disadvantaged pupils, a representative from the Blackpool Challenge, members of the governing committee and the chief executive of the multi-academy trust.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised by the inspection team, including: minutes of governors' meetings; department plans for raising achievement; school development plans; the school's self-evaluation; information about how well current pupils are achieving; evaluations of past pupils' performance; behaviour and bullying records; attendance information; the school's website, the Cidari website; policies; safeguarding documentation, including how well the school supports vulnerable pupils; and the school's evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning.
- Inspectors took account of the 44 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 39 free-text responses received from parents. Inspectors also took into account the 54 responses to the staff online questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Jonathan Smart, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andrew Cooper	Ofsted Inspector
Alyson Middlemass	Ofsted Inspector
Claire Hollister	Ofsted Inspector
John Leigh	Ofsted Inspector
Annette Patterson	Ofsted Inspector

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