

St Gregory's Catholic Academy

Ragpath Lane, Stockton-on-Tees TS19 9AD

Inspection dates

4–5 April 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The rigorous and resolute leadership of the head of school and the temporary headteacher, and the hard work of the whole school team, have transformed learning in St Gregory's Catholic Academy.
- The school has improved rapidly because senior leaders and trust directors have tackled previous weaknesses with rigour.
- Leaders' and directors of the trust's continuing ambition to eradicate underperformance and to provide the best experiences for all pupils is translated into action, and this means the school is continuing to improve.
- The school benefits from a highly positive and caring culture in which diversity is celebrated and kindness valued.
- Outcomes for pupils are now good. Current pupils, including the most able pupils and disadvantaged pupils, are now making strong progress from their starting points.
- Children in the early years are making a solid start in their learning. They benefit from a stimulating and engaging learning environment indoors and outdoors.
- As a result of good teaching, pupils learn quickly and can apply their skills across all subjects. Teachers assess pupils' work carefully and give timely support and guidance so that pupils know their next steps in learning.
- Leaders' planned and agreed actions to improve teaching still further are not yet consistently applied in every class.
- Occasionally, some teachers do not provide work that is suitably challenging for pupils, including the most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils. As a result, their progress slows.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are polite, friendly and have good manners.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning, work well together and are motivated to succeed.
- Leaders have lengthy and detailed plans to improve the school still further. These plans lack a sharp focus on the progress pupils make in their learning and are not regularly monitored to assess their impact on pupils' outcomes.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by:
 - regularly and rigorously reviewing planned actions for school improvement to evaluate their impact on outcomes for pupils
 - ensuring that such planned actions are succinct and sharply focused on their impact on the progress pupils make in their learning.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching by:
 - ensuring that work is well matched to pupils' needs and abilities and provides suitable challenge, especially for most-able and most-able disadvantaged pupils
 - checking that agreed whole-school initiatives and actions to further improve teaching are implemented consistently across every class.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The head of school has been unwavering in her determination to secure an excellent standard of education for pupils in the school. Alongside directors and senior leaders, she has worked tirelessly to eliminate underperformance, improve the quality of teaching and accelerate the rates of progress pupils make in their learning.
- The temporary headteacher picked up the baton in the absence of the head of school, and has maintained the drive to improve quickly. Significant changes in staffing have been effectively managed with an experienced hand so that the quality of teaching has remained good. Teachers work well together, are supportive of each other and are enthusiastic to see further improvements in school. Shrewd appointments have strengthened the leadership team further.
- Leaders and directors have an accurate view of what the school does well and what it needs to do to be even more successful. Procedures to monitor and evaluate the quality of the school's performance through checking the quality of teaching are incisive and detailed.
- Leaders' plans for further improvements reflect a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school improvement plan is very detailed, but lacks focus on ensuring that there is an impact on accelerating the rates of progress pupils make in their learning. Detailed analysis of the success and impact of planned actions is not thorough enough.
- The school's curriculum is rich and balanced and is regularly reviewed to ensure that it meets pupils' needs and interests. Detailed systems exist to track effectively the progress pupils are making across all subjects. Links are made to allow pupils to develop skills across the curriculum, such as making a clay Canopic jar as part of learning about the ancient Egyptians. The curriculum is currently being adapted to include direct links to high-quality texts, aimed at expanding pupils' literary awareness.
- The curriculum is designed to ensure that it provides many varied opportunities for pupils to make visits out of school across the region, or benefit from visitors into school. The curriculum is enhanced by a suitably wide range of after-school clubs, such as the design and technology construction club, the reading club, the mathematics club and various sports clubs. These enhance pupils' interest and engagement in their learning.
- Leaders have managed the pupil premium effectively to provide targeted support for disadvantaged pupils through additional members of staff, training for key members of staff to provide additional support and securing input from a speech and language therapist. In addition, funding has subsidised the cost of some visits and residential experiences to inspire learning across the curriculum. The positive impact of these actions is seen through the good progress now made by disadvantaged pupils across the school, including the most able disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well. Their individual needs are identified early and their progress, which is good, is tracked accurately. Consequently, the special educational needs funding is used effectively by

leaders.

- Links with parents are good, with many making positive comments on the school's questionnaire. Parents say that they know that the school promotes equality of opportunity well and does not tolerate discrimination of any kind – a view shared by inspectors.
- The physical education and sports funding for schools has been used well. Teachers have benefited from professional development opportunities from secondary teachers and, as a result, their own teaching skills have improved. There have also been additional sporting opportunities for pupils, such as martial arts, 'bikeability' and tennis. The views of the school council have also been taken into account and it is developing its own lunchtime and playtime sporting clubs.

Governance of the school

- The Interim Advisory Board is earnest and forthright about school improvement and brings a wide range of professional and educational skills and experience to the school. They have detailed plans to eradicate underperformance, but the plans' lack of focus on pupil progress has made holding school leaders to account unnecessarily difficult. Directors are passionate about supporting school leaders to secure the very best outcomes for pupils.
- The board has ensured that there has been a smooth transition between the temporary headteacher and the head of school, and has provided regular support and direction through the trust's improvement officer. The board has an accurate and incisive view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and knows the school inside out. It is adept at providing challenge and support in equal measure.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has a tangible ethos that is positive and caring, putting the welfare and well-being of each pupil at the heart of all that it does. This is clearly seen in the friendly, happy and confident manner of the pupils in St Gregory's Catholic Academy.
- Policies, procedures and records are of high quality and up to date. Summary records of incidents of concern, no matter how small, are meticulously kept in the online system. All staff are appropriately trained and have access to well-written policies and guidance. As a result, they have a secure understanding of their individual responsibilities for safeguarding.
- The long-established culture of keeping pupils safe remains very evident. Leaders ensure that a culture of safeguarding is embedded among all staff, and leave no stone unturned in their duty to keep pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is now consistently good and its quality is much improved since the previous inspection. The impact of teaching on learning, including in reading, writing and mathematics, is reflected in the strong progress pupils now make in each year group.
- Lessons are usually lively and interesting, capturing pupils' imagination. For example in Year 5, pupils were enthusiastically designing their prototype for a sandal as part of their topic on the Romans. Designs were tested, reviewed and altered before a final product was produced.
- Teachers use good subject knowledge and structure learning effectively. Pupils in Year 4 were able to state that 'kindness' is an abstract noun. Resources are well prepared and engaging. Feedback to pupils offers support and guidance and allows them to understand their next steps in learning and undertake further challenges.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and stick closely to the school's behaviour policy. The very occasional low-level disruption is addressed quickly and effectively.
- Work is usually pitched well according to pupils' abilities and teachers are skilled at adapting and changing plans, based on ongoing assessment of how well pupils grasp learning. On some occasions, work does not provide sufficient challenge, especially for most-able and most-able disadvantaged pupils.
- In mathematics, basic skills of number and mental calculation are taught well and consolidated regularly. Teachers make good use of practical resources to allow pupils to grasp patterns and relationships in number, such as when Year 3 pupils were counting in tenths using cubes. Pupils are developing effectively their abilities to think mathematically and to conjecture and reason when problem-solving.
- Pupils write with enthusiasm and imagination, often because their writing is linked to the text or topic they are studying. Year 6 pupils wrote creatively to produce their own version of a scene from 'The Tempest' by William Shakespeare, changing the past to the present tense.
- As a result of the rigorous and systematic teaching of phonics, which begins in Nursery and moves through key stage 1, children are getting off to a fast start in their reading. Adults are skilled at delivering well-structured lessons.
- Teaching assistants are deployed very well and are skilled at giving timely help and support to individuals and groups of pupils. Pupils who do not grasp key concepts in teaching are given additional support later the same day, preventing them from falling behind.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils show respect and care for each other. They value their classmates' opinions and work happily and cooperatively in lessons. Their skills in paired and group discussions are good.
- Pupils thrive in the positive, well-ordered and caring school environment. Displays are bright and attractive and support learning well. Pupils' physical and emotional well-being are valued and promoted very effectively. This was typified by pupils queuing to nominate someone as the kindest person in school.
- Pupils report that they feel safe at all times, including online. One pupil reported that 'the rules keep us safe'. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is very good. Pupils talked convincingly to an inspector about how they learned about people from other countries and cultures, and how they would treat others.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The very strong relationships that are nurtured in school ensure that pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around school. Pupils are polite, courteous and have good manners. Playtimes are harmonious occasions, where pupils play happily together and no one is left out.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and work conscientiously. Incidents of low-level disruption are rare. Behaviour systems encourage positive attitudes to learning and the very few instances of misbehaviour are deftly addressed.
- The school has worked hard to improve attendance. The attendance officer has a range of strategies, including first-day absence phone calls and meetings with parents, which have been successful in improving the attendance of all pupils and especially those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Progress and attainment have improved since the last inspection. Evidence from pupils' work in books, which matches the school's own tracking data, clearly shows that current pupils are making consistently strong progress in English and mathematics, as well as in other subjects across the curriculum.
- Pupils are making consistently strong progress across Years 1 and 2. The proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, who attained the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was above national figures. A similar proportion of pupils to that found nationally were working at greater depth. Year 1 pupils achieved very well in the national phonics check, with the proportion who met the expected standard above that found nationally.
- Progress is accelerating across key stage 2. In the 2016 assessments, the proportion of pupils in Year 6 who met the expected standard in reading and mathematics was similar to that found nationally, but was above the national standard in writing. Current

pupils are making strong progress in their learning in most year groups, and a very large proportion are working at standards expected for their age.

- The progress of current most-able pupils and most-able disadvantaged pupils largely matches that of their classmates, and has accelerated since the start of the school year. A much larger proportion of Year 6 pupils are on track to achieve a high score in the forthcoming assessments, but this could be even higher if work set is consistently challenging.
- As a result of the effective and strategic use of the pupil premium funding, disadvantaged pupils in each year group make good progress in English and mathematics. Standards reached by disadvantaged pupils, including most-able disadvantaged pupils, at the end of Year 6 in 2016 were below those of other pupils nationally, but are quickly improving.
- The school is quick to identify any pupils who are at risk of falling behind. Staff make effective provision for these pupils through activities which are matched well to their individual needs and abilities. This includes pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Where needed, detailed individual support plans are in place, with challenging targets. As a result, the progress made by these pupils is at least good from their individual starting points.

Early years provision

Good

- Children are eager to explore and learn. They enjoy the opportunities provided to investigate and learn happily together. Their behaviour is consistently good. Progress in personal, social and emotional development is good and this accounts for the strengths seen in children's behaviour and in their relationships with adults. They are encouraged to take turns and to consider others.
- The vast majority of children start the early years with skills and knowledge which are below those typical for their age. As a result of good teaching and provision, careful observation and good questioning, children make good progress and are well prepared to start Year 1.
- Although not all children are making consistently high rates of progress across early years, the proportion reaching a good level of development is above that found nationally.
- Adults observe children carefully and build upon their interests. They carefully support children's learning through prompts and skilful questioning and work alongside children during imaginative and creative play sessions.
- Every opportunity is taken to extend children's thinking. When a minibeast emerged from the sandpit, the Nursery teacher engaged a fascinated child in a discussion about the difference between a beetle and a spider and they counted its legs together.
- Basic skills in reading, writing and number are promoted very effectively. Reception children used cubes to help them complete simple addition calculations, and Nursery children knew the sound of many letters, with quickly developing phonetic awareness.
- The experienced and skilled early years leader understands the learning needs of young children and has successfully created an effective team of adults who share the

same passion and drive to see children thrive. She has a clear understanding of the strengths in early years and has identified key areas for improvement.

- The early years team is skilled at providing activities that promote children's much-needed development in speech, language and communication.
- Leaders are vigilant in all aspects of safety and safeguarding children's welfare. Judging by the confidence and fun with which the children play and learn, they clearly feel very safe, secure and happy.

School details

Unique reference number	139492
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	10031981

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	276
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair of Interim Advisory Board	Mr Jim Cunningham
Head of School	Mrs Fiona Stokeld
Telephone number	01642 672 262
Website	www.stgregorysacademy.org.uk
Email address	enquiries@stgregorysacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 March 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- St Gregory’s Catholic Academy is a similar size to the average-sized primary school and is a member of Carmel Education Trust. The trust is governed by a board of directors.
- St Gregory’s Catholic Academy has its own Interim Advisory Board made up of the chief executive officer, directors of the trust and a diocesan representative. The performance of the head of school is managed by the chair of the Interim Advisory Board and directors of the trust.
- The head of school returned to her post the day before the inspection, following

extended leave. The temporary headteacher was also present during the inspection.

- There have been a number of changes to the teaching staff since the previous inspection.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is higher than the national average.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than that found nationally.
- Early years provision is part-time in the Nursery and full-time in the Reception Year.
- The school meets the current floor standards, which are the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons, including one lesson observed jointly with the head of school. In addition, an inspector listened to some pupils from Years 1 and 2 read, and inspectors reviewed a sample of pupils' work alongside the head of school and temporary headteacher.
- Inspectors held meetings with the Interim Advisory Board, the head of school, the temporary headteacher and other members of the teaching staff. They also held meetings with pupils from the school council.
- Inspectors viewed a range of documents, including information on pupils' achievements over time, the school's data on recent and current progress of pupils and the school's view on how well it is doing. Inspectors also reviewed the school improvement plan, documents relating to safeguarding and records of behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of the comments made by parents online and responses to the online inspection questionnaire for staff. The school's website was also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Phil Scott, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Bissett	Ofsted Inspector
Donna Callaghan	Ofsted Inspector

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