

St Gregory the Great Catholic School

Cricket Road, Cowley, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX4 3DR

Inspection dates

15–16 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The arrangements for safeguarding in the secondary phase of the school are not effective. This includes the sixth form.
- Staff and parents are rightly concerned about the safety of pupils in the secondary phase of the school. Many pupils are worried about the poor behaviour shown by a significant minority of pupils.
- In focusing on a budgetary deficit, senior leaders have been unable to deal effectively with the required improvements in behaviour, teaching and outcomes noted at the last inspection. As a result, weaknesses in these areas remain.
- Directors of Dominic Barberi multi-academy company (DBMAC) have failed to ensure that leaders had enough capacity during and since the subsequent restructuring to bring about necessary improvements at the school.
- Directors have an unrealistic expectation of how much the principal can achieve, due to her responsibilities for other schools in the multi-academy company.
- Leaders do not consistently evaluate the impact of actions taken. This makes it difficult for academy representatives on the local governing board to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school accurately.
- Pupils' attendance and punctuality to lessons in the secondary phase are not good enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Leadership of the primary phase of the school is strong and the arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Teaching promotes the achievement of every pupil, within a caring community.
- Children make a strong start to their learning in the Nursery and Reception Years. They make good progress due to the high expectations of their behaviour and what they can achieve.
- Effective leadership of teaching in the sixth form ensures that students achieve well. Students benefit from sound guidance to help them progress to aspirational next steps.
- Throughout the school, hardworking and committed leaders and staff value and show compassion for all pupils.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that safeguarding is effective, by:
 - making sure that leaders and governors know, understand and carry out their statutory safeguarding responsibilities effectively
 - ensuring that staff are well trained in the use of restrictive physical intervention
 - having clear and consistent systems that enable any adult to record any concern promptly
 - making sure that all actions following a concern are systematically recorded, so that it is clear who did what and when.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, by:
 - ensuring that governors review all aspects of the school's work to hold leaders to account, using full and accurate information, so that required improvements are secured and sustained
 - increasing the levels of capacity and expertise in behaviour management and ensuring that staff are supported so that they can implement an agreed approach to managing behaviour
 - ensuring that leaders look carefully at the progress of different groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able disadvantaged pupils, to ensure that additional funding is used effectively to raise achievement.
- Improve pupils' behaviour in key stages 3 and 4 so that it is at least good, by:
 - making sure that well-trained staff have consistently high expectations of pupils' behaviour
 - improving the attendance of pupils
 - ensuring that pupils in the secondary phase move to lessons promptly and that incidents of bullying are addressed robustly.
- Improve the quality of teaching so it is consistently good, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving.
- Raise pupils' achievement through key stages 1 to 4, by:
 - accelerating pupils' progress so they make good progress over time
 - ensuring that pupils reach higher standards in GCSE examinations
 - making sure that the most able pupils reach the high standards of which they are capable.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of the leadership may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how this may be improved.

It is recommended that the school does not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leadership and management are inadequate because directors of DBMAC, academy representatives on the local governing body and the school's senior leaders have failed to ensure that pupils in the secondary phase of the school are safe. Safeguarding in the secondary phase, which includes the sixth form, is not effective.
- Shortly after the previous inspection it became apparent that the school had a considerable budget deficit. The Education Funding Agency issued a financial notice to the DBMAC to improve. Staff from the DBMAC financial team left and the school's senior leaders focused on responding to these difficulties, without at the same time bringing about the required improvements in behaviour, teaching and outcomes noted at the last inspection.
- A major restructuring of staffing has taken place, which included a reduction in the number of senior leadership positions. The principal of the school is now accountable for six primary schools in the DBMAC. In the autumn term, she provided interim leadership for one of the schools, following the departure of its headteacher, reducing leadership capacity at St Gregory the Great School further. Poor strategic leadership by DBMAC has contributed to the decline in the overall effectiveness of the school.
- Many of the recommendations for improvement made in the school's previous inspection report have not been met because of the significant programme of ongoing change and staff restructuring. However, in some cases senior leaders' ineffective monitoring and evaluation of actions taken was also a contributory factor.
- Despite many challenges, the hard working and dedicated staff have sustained the overall quality of teaching and progress of pupils, although these aspects of the school still require improvement to be good. Leaders in key stage 1 and the sixth form have ensured some improvement in pupils' progress in these stages.
- The leadership and management of behaviour at the school are inadequate. Pupils' behaviour in the secondary phase is poor and has deteriorated since the prolonged absence of the assistant principal with oversight of behaviour. A small minority of pupils seriously misbehave, but a greater number regularly disrupt lessons. Leaders do not ensure that reliable records of behaviour incidents are made or analysed.
- Despite the turbulence caused by the restructuring, many staff remain committed to the school, while feeling increasingly undervalued and unsupported by senior leaders. Staff are particularly concerned by the deteriorating behaviour in the secondary phase and express concerns about the safety of pupils. One member of staff summed up the views of many when they said: 'I love this school, but we cannot go on like this.'
- Staff working in the primary phase expressed a much more positive view. They show pride in the ethos being fostered, report high levels of commitment throughout the primary phase and praise leaders' strong support for staff.
- Fewer than six out of 10 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to another parent. A large majority of parents who left free-text responses, or contacted inspectors in other ways, were

concerned about behaviour, bullying and safeguarding.

- Inconsistencies in teaching and communication were criticised. Some senior leaders were described as 'distant' and not dealing with issues. There is a general view that the school 'is not what it used to be'. One parent stated: 'This is not the same school my son started at... I hear nothing but bad things'. In contrast, almost all of the positive comments referenced the primary phase of the school. Parents are particularly pleased with the way their children are introduced to the school, as well as with the progress they make. The Catholic, caring, nurturing ethos is praised.
- The principal and governors express a clear vision for the school that promotes the achievement of every pupil within an inclusive, caring community based on Christian values. There is a strong culture of compassion and support and school leaders welcome all pupils to the school, irrespective of the challenges they sometimes bring.
- There is an emphasis on developing pupils' spirituality within this multi-faith school. Pupils with a range of backgrounds generally mix very well. However, leaders' ambitions for pupils' high achievement academically, socially and spiritually are not currently being met.
- The reorganisation of the pastoral system in the secondary phase into year groups, since September 2016, has been welcomed by middle leaders with responsibility for pastoral support. These pastoral leaders are setting out with determination to tackle the challenges of poor behaviour and low attendance and are supported strongly by pastoral managers. There are positive signs of early success with some individual pupils, but the pastoral leaders' overall impact is limited by a lack of strategic leadership and management by senior leaders.
- Subject leadership is improving, linked to new appointments since the last inspection. Leaders are beginning to show sharper analysis of pupils' performance, followed by appropriate strategic responses. However, their efforts are hampered by a significant turnover of staff and difficulties in recruiting, particularly to temporary positions.
- Middle leaders responsible for year groups, and subject leaders, have had few opportunities for leadership training or to meet and share ideas. Although these leaders show commitment, and are implementing changes designed to improve standards, the impact of their work on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress is not yet evident.
- Middle leaders' monitoring of teaching and evaluation of the improvement actions they take are limited. Furthermore, subject leaders are spending a lot of time dealing with secondary pupils' poor behaviour, which reduces their ability to stand back and take a strategic overview.
- The special educational needs coordinator has been in post since September 2016. She sensibly reviewed the school's provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, trying to balance the support for pupils' learning, emotional and well-being needs. Her systematic approach has shown positive early impact.
- The senior leader responsible for teaching and learning in the secondary phase has recently introduced promising systems for monitoring teaching and identifying teachers' training needs. As a result, some targeted professional development is underway, although the impact is not yet evident, partly because it is not evaluated systematically. For example, there is no clear follow-up to check whether the training provided has improved pupils' progress. Newly qualified teachers and other staff new

to the school value the support they receive from their mentors, but are unsettled by constant changes in the secondary school phase and the lack of support for behaviour management from senior leaders.

- A comprehensive review of the curriculum has taken place and its sensible recommendations are beginning to be implemented. The review set out to raise pupils' achievement, and balance the needs and best interests of the pupils in the school, within the school's budget.
- The curriculum throughout the school is supported by a rich programme of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. After-school clubs include the school's rock band, EAL (English as an additional language), choir, drama, computer clubs and many sports clubs. Pupils in the secondary phase and sixth-form students are able to go on spiritual retreats.
- School leaders are committed to preparing their pupils for their next steps, particularly in the sixth form and there is extensive independent careers advice and guidance.
- Leadership of the primary phase is strong and outcomes are improving. The behaviour of some vulnerable pupils is a challenge, but this aspect is managed well. Effective leaders in the primary phase are working hard to implement a number of initiatives to improve teaching, behaviour and achievement. Children's progress through the early years is strong and improving, but outcomes at the end of key stage 1 are not yet good.
- The school uses the additional primary sports premium funding well, to coach staff to develop their multi-sport skills and to provide useful equipment to enhance sports provision for pupils. Following the specialist coaching, teaching of physical education in the primary phase has improved.
- School leaders liaise with some schools across the city and in the East Oxford partnership, but most contact is with other DBMAC schools. During the autumn term, the principal supported Our Lady's Catholic Primary School, a DBMAC school, in the absence of its headteacher.
- During the two years since the last inspection, the principal and leaders at St Gregory the Great school have received little external support. Education officers from the Catholic Diocese of Birmingham have belatedly identified a national leader of education to advise leaders. The directors of DBMAC have agreed that the academy company will pay for this provision.

Governance of the school

- Both the directors of the DBMAC board and the academy representatives on the local governing body lack a clear understanding of the level of difficulties at the school.
- Directors acknowledge that improvement at the school has not been adequate and express concerns about leadership capacity. However, under their direction, problems have continued and behaviour and safety have worsened.
- Directors and academy representatives do not meet their statutory responsibilities to keep pupils safe. Academy representatives do not have an oversight of the systems that leaders have developed to keep pupils safe, so are not able to ask probing

questions about their effectiveness.

- Academy representatives on the local governing body have a better grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, they are not always given full and accurate information by school leaders. For example, they were not fully aware of the extent of poor behaviour in the secondary phase of the school, prior to the inspection.
- Pupil premium funding is used to provide a range of additional enrichment and support designed to help disadvantaged pupils make better progress. However, there is scant evaluation of the impact of this funding against targets, so governors do not know whether disadvantaged pupils are making as much progress as they could or the school expects of them.
- Similarly, there is insufficient evaluation of the impact of Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding for pupils who joined the school with attainment below national expectations.
- Following the previous review of governance, steps have been taken to recruit academy representatives with a range of skills and expertise, although vacancies remain. Very little training of these governors has taken place, due to budgetary constraints. The chair and vice-chair are dedicated and determined to drive improvement. However, they remain frustrated by the legacy of previously inadequate financial management which continues to affect the school adversely and the level of accountability placed on the principal, which makes it difficult for her to focus sharply on leading this school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding in the secondary phase, including in the sixth form, are not effective. The arrangements for safeguarding in the primary phase, which is separate from the secondary phase, are effective.
- Leaders' capacity to oversee the demanding caseload across the primary and secondary phases is limited. The assistant principal with responsibility for the leadership of the primary phase, including safeguarding, has recently taken oversight of safeguarding across the whole school. Although she knows what needs to change, the required developments are not yet in place.
- There is a legacy of weak practice in leaders' responses to concerns about secondary pupils raised by staff in the school. Concerns about pupils and actions taken are not recorded systematically, referrals to the local authority are not always timely and information is not consistently shared appropriately.
- The use of physical restraint by staff responding to incidents is too high. Not all incidents are recorded fully. Not enough staff have been adequately trained in the use of de-escalation techniques.
- A significant number of staff feel that pupils may not be safe in the secondary school. Some pupils also say they do not feel safe in certain areas of the school. Many pupils are not in lessons when they should be and there is insufficient supervision to check their whereabouts and activities.
- Statutory procedures for checking staff suitability to work with children across the school are efficiently managed. The security of the site has been much improved and

entry to both secondary and primary phases is tightly controlled.

- In the primary phase, including the early years, practice is much more thorough and records are in order. There is a culture of safeguarding throughout the primary phase, with all staff taking responsibility for keeping pupils and children safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- There are too many variations in the quality of teaching between different classes and subjects to secure pupils' good achievement. Across the school, teachers do not have consistently high expectations of all pupils, particularly the most able. Teachers too readily accept superficial answers to questions, rather than probing for deeper understanding.
- Lessons in the secondary phase sometimes get off to a disrupted start due to the late arrival of pupils. This interrupts the learning of the majority of pupils who are trying to get on with the tasks set. It also shows disrespect towards the teachers, who are working hard to plan engaging lessons, and other pupils, whose progress is slowed.
- Teachers do not use the information they have about pupils' previous achievement to consistently set work at an appropriate level for pupils. The most able are not routinely required to complete challenging tasks and this holds back their progress. Sometimes, pupils are presented with challenging tasks which they are not yet equipped to tackle, or moved on too quickly before they have a secure knowledge and understanding of the basics.
- More explicit expectations about the structure of lessons have contributed to improved lesson planning. Although poor behaviour by some secondary pupils has reduced the effectiveness of teaching overall, pupils' work shows that, over time, most pupils have been progressing steadily during lessons. Older pupils feel positive about their learning in lessons taught by substantive staff, but complain about the high number of lessons taught by supply teachers.
- Where teaching is most effective, clear routines and strong relationships between staff and pupils build high levels of trust. Here, teaching takes close account of pupils' individual and collective starting points, and uses a wide range of strategies to meet their needs.
- Examples of pupils working productively were seen across all years in the school. For example, inspectors found Year 7 pupils engrossed creating a collage based on the work of Matisse and Year 10 pupils well focused on different ways of calculating proportions in mathematics.
- Many teachers know their pupils well. They regularly check their pupils' progress through assessments. There are examples of effective feedback to pupils in line with the school's expectations. In these instances, pupils clearly understand what they have to do to improve and, generally, act upon this feedback.
- However, there are some instances when assessment information is not being used fully to help teachers plan the next steps in pupils' learning. Often, pupils do not act productively on the useful feedback given to improve their work.
- The teaching of phonics is improving. In Year 1, pupils are now developing secure early

reading skills as a result of the strengthened, structured approach to teaching phonics and effective staff training. Small-group work is enabling pupils in Years 2 and 3 to help close gaps in their earlier learning. High-quality modelling by teachers and teaching assistants helps pupils to sound out letters and words clearly and make strong progress.

- In the primary phase, teaching in mathematics emphasises the accurate use of basic skills. The development of important skills such as problem-solving is not yet strong because teachers pose too few 'real life' applications for pupils to grapple with. Writing is improving rapidly, including in Year 3, as teachers show high expectations that pupils will write accurately, at length. However, not all pupils in Year 3 use cursive writing consistently.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Younger pupils in the secondary phase say there are people they can talk to if they have a problem, but some pupils are afraid to report bullying.
- School staff work closely with family support workers from Father Hudson's Care, which is the social care agency of the Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham. This approach provides valuable support for some families, but the caseload has now outstripped the resources available.
- The attendance and progress of secondary pupils who attend alternative provision are monitored and some programmes have a positive impact. However, some other pupils on reduced timetables are supposed to be working at home for the rest of the time and their whereabouts are not closely monitored.
- In the primary phase, including the early years, practice to support the personal development and welfare of children and pupils is highly developed and increasingly effective.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- In the secondary phase, pupils report that behaviour is poor and younger secondary pupils do not feel safe in certain areas of the school where older pupils congregate.
- After breaks and between lessons, some secondary pupils are slow to move to their next lesson. These pupils interrupt learning when they join their classes. Many lessons are disrupted by pupils talking to each other and not following instructions. A minority of pupils are disrespectful or rude to staff. Teachers apply the behaviour policy inconsistently.
- Pupils do not show pride in the secondary site. After break and lunchtime, there is litter on the playground and in stairwells. Conduct around the school is generally orderly, but some swearing and offensive language is used by pupils.

- Attendance in the primary and secondary phases and in the sixth form is well below the national average. In the secondary phase, attendance is declining further.
- Exclusions in the secondary phase are much higher than national levels, although there are fewer than last year. Most reasons for fixed-term exclusions are for verbal abuse and physical assaults. Several pupils are repeat offenders because the steps taken to help pupils improve their behaviour have not worked.
- The majority of secondary pupils behave sensibly around the school and work diligently in lessons when the teaching is engaging.
- In the primary phase, pupils' behaviour is much better than the secondary phase. The primary provision, consisting of the early years and Years 1 to 3, is happy and orderly. Time taken at the start of the day to settle pupils helps to generate a calm atmosphere. When pupils show challenging behaviour staff respond rapidly to reassure the pupil while making expectations clear.
- Behaviour incidents in the primary phase are recorded thoroughly and reviewed regularly. When pupils display poor behaviour, this is dealt with calmly and effectively. Repeat offending is rare.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- For the last three years, GCSE outcomes at the end of key stage 4 have been well below national levels. The school's performance information shows that attainment in forthcoming GCSE examinations is likely to be similarly low.
- The outcomes reported in the published accountability tables will continue to be low for two more years, due to the limited combination of subjects that pupils in Years 10 and 11 are studying. However, current Year 9 pupils have been directed to choose more academic GCSE subjects, raising the possibility of improved outcomes in future national comparisons.
- In order to improve outcomes for the most able, in Years 8 to 11, top sets have been created in most subjects. This approach is already yielding success, with the performance of the most able accelerating, especially in Year 11. However, throughout the school, the achievement of the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, is currently too low, due to low expectations and teaching which offers insufficient stretch and challenge.
- Overall progress made by disadvantaged pupils throughout the school is at least as good as that of their peers, although not improving rapidly enough to make up for their lower starting points.
- A revamped curriculum and sharper procedures for assessing pupils in key stage 3 is enabling the progress of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 to be monitored more closely. The school's information shows that most pupils in key stage 3 are achieving broadly age-related expectations, and inspectors agreed, having reviewed pupils' work.
- Pupils in the nurture group in key stage 3 experience a supportive environment. The Year 7 nurture class is taught mainly by one teacher, who helps equip them for transition into subject classes when they are ready. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in the group receive effective and well-structured provision.

Other, low-attaining, pupils are not consistently stretched and challenged. However, during the inspection the whole class were confidently tackling a range of specialist equipment in a technology lesson and taking pride in their products.

- Pupils across the school who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have benefited from more accurate assessment of need recently, followed by sharply focused interventions which are improving pupils' speech, language and literacy skills rapidly.
- In 2016, by the end of key stage 1 the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was well below the national average. These pupils, now in Year 3, are the first class to progress through the primary phase. During this period a higher number of pupils joined the class than is typical nationally. Some of these pupils did not speak English confidently, which lowered overall outcomes at the end of Year 2. Year 3 pupils are now progressing well, but they have not yet reached high enough standards.
- The school's performance information shows that outcomes at the end of key stage 1 are on course to be better than last year. However, pupils in Year 2 are not yet achieving standards expected for their age consistently. Staff know the weaknesses or barriers to learning for each child and are setting out to address these energetically.
- In 2016, standards in the Year 1 phonics check were below the national average, but much higher than 2015. Improvements are also evident in the current Year 1 where the school's information shows that pupils are acquiring the skills needed for success in reading more rapidly than in the past. During the inspection, pupils in Year 3 read to inspectors with confidence and sensitivity. There is a strong culture of reading developing within the primary phase of the school.
- In 2016, the proportion of children in the early years who achieved a good level of development by the end of their Reception Year was above the national average. Standards continue to rise, with an even higher proportion on course to reach the expected standard this year.
- In 2016, the progress made by sixth-form students was significantly above national levels. The school's information shows that current students are making similarly strong progress.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years provision is within the primary phase, which is located on a separate part of the school site. There are high levels of security to enter the primary provision. The highly effective primary phase leader is responsible for the effective safeguarding in this part of the school.
- Safeguarding records are up to date and referrals are followed up promptly and well documented. Leaders respond quickly to any concerns they have and work effectively with families and other agencies to keep pupils safe.
- There are well-developed induction procedures when children join the Nursery Year or Reception Year. Parents appreciate the time staff take to get to know their child beforehand through home visits and visits to their child's prior provision. This helps

staff meet children's emotional and learning needs well.

- Parents who spoke to inspectors were very positive about the level of care shown to their children. One parent's comments represented the views of most parents when she said: 'My son is completely happy and tells me each day what he has been up to.' Parents appreciate the range of opportunities they have to get involved with their children's learning, including regular newsletters which keep them up to date.
- Children settle quickly at the start of the day. Very well established routines help children to feel calm and secure in both the Nursery and Reception classes. Children show the confidence to talk and share their feelings and ideas. Relationships are strong and high levels of independence are encouraged. The similar routines across the early years help children move from Nursery to Reception Year smoothly.
- In both the Nursery and Reception classes, there is a good balance between outdoor and indoor activities, which are all carefully thought out. The outdoor play areas are very well equipped and the children thoroughly enjoy the facilities, while developing their physical skills. Children behave well, cooperate and show a growing respect for each other. The atmosphere is purposeful, children focus well and sustain concentration during more formal learning and when playing together.
- Skilled teachers and teaching assistants support children well to learn through their play. One group of children in Reception Year asked a teaching assistant to write with them about dinosaurs. She developed the children's language effectively by asking challenging questions and by prompting the children to use more sophisticated words.
- Children enter the Nursery Year with skills and abilities that are below those typical for their age, particularly language skills. Children make good progress in Nursery Year and the majority are ready to make the transition into Reception Year. In 2016, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development at the end of Reception Year was above the national average. This represents strong achievement through the early years.
- This success is due to precise planning by the teachers who, together with teaching assistants, assess children's needs accurately and plan engaging activities designed to meet their learning needs. Disadvantaged children are making rapid progress.
- Skilful questioning helps children to think deeply and work out solutions for themselves. However, sometimes the most able children are not stretched because staff accept monosyllabic responses and children are not required to speak in sentences. This limits the development of their writing.

16 to 19 study programmes

Inadequate

- The sixth form is inadequate because arrangements for safeguarding in the secondary phase are not effective. Other aspects of the sixth form are strong, including leadership.
- The head of the sixth form is an effective pastoral leader, who is vigilant about students' safety and well-being. She communicates well and facilitates an open and honest culture where students feel comfortable to share their worries and problems. However, the accountability for safeguarding sixth-form students lies with governors

and the school's senior leaders, and inspectors judged this as ineffective.

- At the end of 2016, the school met both the academic and vocational minimum standards. Students made very strong progress in academic subjects. These outcomes represented a significant improvement when compared with 2015. The proportion of top A-level grades also increased.
- Students enter the sixth form with GCSE grades lower than typical nationally. The students with the lowest prior attainment, including grade D or below at GCSE, make the greatest progress. Many of these students have underachieved at GCSE due to the poor progress they made by the end of their Year 11. In 2016, higher expectations and effective teaching enabled these students to achieve much more highly by the end of their sixth-form studies.
- When students enter the sixth form they are immediately confronted by a noticeable cultural shift. The head of the sixth form provides a strong lead to both staff and students. She is uncompromising in her high expectations of standards, attendance, behaviour and commitment by students.
- The rapid turnaround in students' performance is illustrated by the 15 students who improved from grade D to C when they retook their GCSE English examinations 10 weeks after joining the sixth form. The proportion of students who improve their grades when they retake GCSE English in the sixth form is much higher than national levels. The proportion who improve their GCSE grade in mathematics is in line with national levels.
- Leaders carefully track students' progress, identify those who are in danger of falling behind and ensure that effective support is provided. Leaders also check which subjects are promoting progress better than others and hold subject leaders to account robustly. This helps current students to make strong progress.
- Teaching in the sixth form is consistently good. During the inspection, teachers' secure subject knowledge, high expectations and skilful questioning were extending students' learning well. The curriculum is appropriately designed to help students adjust to the higher academic demands of A-level qualifications.
- To broaden their studies, all students follow an extended project qualification. This deep study provides challenge, enrichment and something interesting for students to talk about at interviews for higher education, apprenticeships or employment.
- Sixth form leaders know their students well. They are sensitive to the complexities in their students' lives and offer strong pastoral support. Students who spoke to inspectors were grateful for the care, guidance and effective teaching they receive. Students show high aspirations and this is another real strength of the sixth form provision. Many sixth-form students are the first generation in their families to apply for university.
- Links with the community are strong and varied. A youth worker from Oxford works with some sixth formers to devise a project to inform younger pupils about the dangers of radicalisation. Every week, undergraduate students from the universities in Oxford provide one-to-one tuition after school. Several sixth formers go on spiritual retreat with school chaplains.
- The development of students' wider skills and their preparation for life in modern

Britain is a strength of the sixth form. An impressive extra-curricular and tutorial programme challenges students' thinking about moral and social issues and encourages mature debate.

- Retention from Year 12 into Year 13 is high. Only a few students leave, for personal reasons. The school has an excellent programme of careers education and guidance for sixth-form students, which includes advice about apprenticeships as well as university education.
- The work experience arranged by Year 12 students helps to improve their employability skills. Students are given bespoke support for university applications. Almost all students who left the school in 2016 went onto further education, employment or training, with an increasing proportion of students taking up places at the Russell group of universities and Oxbridge.

School details

Unique reference number	139528
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10032876

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,370
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	159
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	David Forster
Principal	Dr Marcella McCarthy
Telephone number	01865 749933
Website	www.stgregory.oxon.sch.uk
Email address	stgregory@dbmac.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 March 2015

Information about this school

- St Gregory the Great Catholic School provides for a range of age groups. It comprises a larger-than-average 11 to 18 secondary school and a primary school which currently caters for pupils up to Year 3. Its early years provision includes a Nursery Year, where children attend full or part time, and a Reception Year, which children attend on a full-time basis.
- The school is sponsored by the Dominic Barberi multi-academy company (DBMAC). The board of directors is the accountable body for the schools in DBMAC. Below the board, St Gregory the Great school has a local governing body, and members of this body are called 'academy representatives'.

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what the academy should publish on its website about how it spends its pupil premium funding and its Year 7 literacy and catch-up premium.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 4 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.
- In 2016, the school met the government's floor standards that set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at key stage 4.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is similar to the national average.
- The school has a larger-than-average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups. Over four out of every 10 pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is just below the national average.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at Meadowbrook School and TRAX Oxfordshire motor project.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 37 lessons across a range of year groups from Nursery to Year 13. A few of these lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work in lessons and a further selection of pupils' books was chosen to scrutinize. Pupils' behaviour was observed in lessons, around the school and during breaks.
- Inspectors held meetings with the principal and senior leaders, groups of middle leaders, teachers, governors (called academy representatives) and directors of the Dominic Barberi multi-academy company.
- Inspectors took account of 68 responses to the confidential questionnaires received from staff and also met with individuals and groups of staff.
- The views of pupils were taken into account and inspectors met with groups of pupils from all years in the secondary phase, including sixth-form students.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, taking into account 96 responses to the online Ofsted parent questionnaire, Parent View, including free-text responses. Inspectors also spoke informally to some parents.
- Inspectors evaluated key documents including the school's strategic planning documents; minutes of meetings, including governor meetings; reports of attendance and behavior; and records related to pupils' safety and academic progress.

Inspection team

Theresa Phillips, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Janet Pearce	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lucy English	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kevin Parfoot	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Duke	Ofsted Inspector
Bill James	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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