

St Gregory's Catholic Primary School, Margate

Nash Road, Margate, Kent CT9 4BU

Inspection dates

9–10 May 2017

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
Early years provision	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

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is uneven across year groups and within subjects. This is particularly the case in in key stage 1.
- Middle leadership is underdeveloped and, as a result, leaders do not yet have enough impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- In mathematics, pupils are not confident enough in mathematical reasoning and problem-solving.
- Pupils do not always spell high-frequency words or technical language accurately.
- Expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough, particularly in key stage 1, where the most able are not always given challenging enough work.
- Early years provision in the Nursery and in the Reception classes require improvement to enable all children to make rapid progress from their starting points.
- Leaders do not always engage parents in a timely manner when planning school improvements.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and have recently introduced new initiatives to improve learning and progress.
- Governors and leaders make effective use of external advice. They share best practice within the school and beyond.
- Governors have transformed the way they work and are increasingly challenging leaders over weak performance.
- The school is moving in the right direction. The quality of teaching and outcomes in English and mathematics are improving rapidly in key stage 2.
- Leaders have taken decisive action to improve behaviour and attendance across the school. As a result, pupils' conduct is good and attendance is improving.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a strong sense of the world around them.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the impact that leaders and governors have on improving the school by ensuring that:
 - new curriculum and teaching strategies are used consistently well to accelerate pupils' progress
 - teachers' planning more effectively supports all pupils, including the most able and those pupils in danger of falling behind
 - teachers learn from the practice of the most effective teachers in the school.
- Improve outcomes for pupils by:
 - increasing the proportion of key stage 1 pupils working at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics
 - providing pupils with more accurate feedback on their spelling so that they can improve their literacy across the curriculum
 - accelerating the progress of children, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged, in the early years.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher has faced a significant challenge in recruiting staff of good calibre. Despite this, she has built a capable senior leadership team that is ambitious for the pupils in its care. Leaders have established a positive culture which has the capacity to drive improvement in all areas of school life.
- School leaders have worked hard to mitigate against the adverse effects of staffing changes, identifying and addressing gaps for individual pupils and groups. However, the impact of this work is not yet consistent across the school and across subjects.
- In the past, planning for improvement was not sharply focused but leaders have now correctly identified areas for improvement and taken action to address the weaknesses that remain in the school.
- Leaders make effective use of specialist practitioners and external consultants, and take prompt action in response to advice and reviews. Collaboration with other schools locally and within the Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership Trust has also contributed positively to the strategies leaders have taken to raise standards.
- Leaders have improved the quality of the curriculum to extend pupils' learning and provide them with a wide range of experiences. Leaders have introduced many useful techniques and ideas to support teachers to improve their practice. However, these have not been adopted consistently across the school. As a result, there is some variation in the quality of teaching.
- Funding for pupils who have special educational needs and or/disabilities is used effectively. These pupils make good progress particularly in upper key stage 2. The school uses funding effectively to provide well-judged support, including in the early years, that is suitably matched to pupils' needs.
- There is an established parents' council which provides opportunities for parents to raise questions and discuss issues as they arise. They also receive regular newsletters and information about the curriculum. However, some parents have expressed the view that communication could be better and feel that information is not always shared in a timely manner.
- Changes to the school's approach to managing teachers' pay and performance this year have led to procedures that are now more thorough, robust and focused on the pupils.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Through assemblies and teaching, the school encourages friendship, thankfulness, truthfulness, forgiveness and perseverance. Adults develop pupils' understanding of British values and a greater awareness of the world in which they live. They are actively involved in raising money for charities both locally and in other countries.
- The primary physical education and sport premium funding is well managed and deployed to ensure greater participation and to develop skills. There are a wide range of opportunities for pupils.
- In the last academic year, pupil premium funding was not targeted accurately enough

and, as a result, pupils eligible for funding did not make enough progress. However, this year, leaders and governors have prioritised the most effective initiatives, which are now improving the learning and progress of disadvantaged pupils.

Governance

- Governors have transformed the way they work and are passionate in their ambition for all pupils. They have a wide range of skills which are matched to their roles within the governing body. They regularly visit the school to review the work of leaders and increase their understanding of current issues.
- Governors scrutinise achievement information and analyse the progress of pupils carefully. They have become more involved in supporting leaders to work towards continuous improvement and are increasingly providing effective challenge. The trust provides them with regular training and challenge so that they continually improve their effectiveness.
- Governors now check the use of finances carefully to ensure that spending supports the learning and progress of all pupils, including the primary physical education and sport premium funding and more effective pupil premium spending.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All statutory checks are carried out robustly and safe recruitment procedures are in place and well recorded. Safeguarding training is thorough and up to date.
- School leaders actively promote safeguarding practices. Leaders and support staff in the school work especially effectively with external agencies to support those pupils and families who need additional help. Governors exercise good oversight of this area of the school by checking the policies and practices.
- Pupils feel safe at school. They know which members of staff are designated to lead safeguarding. They are happy to confide in staff when they have a concern and are confident that staff take appropriate action. They receive regular assemblies and information on how to be safe and stay safe. Their lessons include information on e-safety and potential risks from strangers.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Leaders are ensuring that the quality of teaching is beginning to improve. However, teaching is not yet consistently good because expectations of what key stage 1 pupils can achieve are not always high enough.
- Teachers do not always use assessment information well enough to plan lessons and ensure that pupils make good progress. When expectations and starting points for learning are too low, pupils do not learn as well as they should.
- Teachers have built positive relationships with pupils and use praise effectively to

support pupils' learning and confidence. However, some pupils, especially younger pupils, are too dependent on adults to support their learning and guide their learning behaviours. As a result, they do not always focus well or extend their learning independently.

- Some younger pupils have limited use of vocabulary and do not have enough opportunities to develop their descriptive language. By contrast, more consistent practice in key stage 2 has resulted in older pupils acquiring a good understanding of figurative language. For example, they are able to identify literary features in poetry successfully.
- Leaders have used successful strategies such as a 'Shakespeare club', reading challenges and storytelling to increase progress in reading and writing. These strategies have engaged all pupils, increasing their participation and confidence.
- Key stage 2 pupils take pride in their work and use neat, legible handwriting. Where teachers provide effective feedback, pupils respond well and improve their work. However, high-frequency words and technical vocabulary are sometimes spelled incorrectly.
- The teaching of phonics has improved in recent times and, as a result, pupils are now better enabled to develop their reading skills. Pupils who lag behind, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who struggle in their reading receive effective support so they catch up with their peers.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to reading and enjoy reading at home and at school. They can talk about their favourite authors. They have regular access to the school library and are encouraged to read for pleasure. Pupils are challenged to read every day and are recognised for their commitment through individual and class reading awards.
- In mathematics, new resources, assessment strategies, training and interventions are in place to improve performance. These changes aim to ensure that pupils know basic number facts well and that they can use these facts to solve mathematical problems. Leaders have modelled practice to help teachers to improve the quality of provision. Some teachers are receiving more support to be fully secure in the delivery of these changes.
- Teachers are beginning to provide pupils with opportunities to practise and consolidate skills to achieve mastery of mathematics. Pupils' mathematics books show that they have opportunities to develop ideas through reasoning, problem solving and challenges. However, practice remains variable.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils enjoy the many opportunities they have to experience learning outside the classroom.
- Leaders have created a caring school environment successfully, underpinned by its

Christian ethos. Pupils are provided with a wide range of enrichment activities. These help pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, including their tolerance and respect for others.

- The school's breakfast club is set up well with good supervision and facilities. Pupils speak enthusiastically about this additional provision. After-school provision includes a wide range of sporting and other activities. Pupils also receive useful help and support to improve their learning.
- Attendance was low but has improved. It is now in line with the national average as a result of persistent efforts by school leaders to challenge absence. School leaders and governors have made effective use of trust's expertise, external agencies, the school nurse and the pastoral behaviour manager to support pupils' good attendance. The attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils is also improving because there are now good systems in place to track and monitor attendance and to provide support when it is needed.
- Pupils know that attendance is important if they want to learn well and make better progress. Pupils are now taking ownership of their own attendance. They are recognised for good attendance with 'class of the week' awards, 100% attendance bookmarks, appearing on the roll of honour and in summer term special events.
- There are a wide variety of play opportunities which are well supported by adults. Pupils run around and play together. Peer mediators support positive play and younger pupils enjoy their company. Pupils can speak to these older pupils or adults if they need help, and are confident that if problems arise they are always resolved.
- The school's personal development programme is especially effective. Pupils receive good guidance about how to stay safe. Pupils have many opportunities to work with various charities, and have an understanding of the ways in which they can help others both locally and internationally.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
 - Pupils are proud of their school. They are smartly dressed and respectful towards staff and visitors alike. They make sure that visitors are well looked after. Older pupils are able to engage adults in conversation with both maturity and humour. Pupils move sensibly around the school, and hold doors open for adults readily. They play well together and enjoy using the equipment provided for them.
 - Behaviour and attitudes to learning are generally good. Pupils listen to each other and to the teachers. They collaborate well and are respectful towards the views of others. However, when teachers do not plan effectively or have low expectations, pupils lose interest, become distracted and do not take an active role in their learning.
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- Pupils have a good understanding of the school rules to ensure good behaviour. The vast majority of pupils follow these well. New behaviour management approaches are

being used and pupils enjoy moving positively through the behaviour zones to become 'super silver' or 'glorious gold' learners. They also understand the school's sanctions for negative behaviour. Additional strategies are in place to support or manage behaviour for more vulnerable pupils.

- Pupils are aware of different types of bullying and the impact that it has. Pupils commented that, in the past, there had been some bullying but that it happens now rarely. Pupils do not use aggressive or derogatory language. They feel able to speak to teachers when they have any worries and know that bullying will be dealt with effectively.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The proportion of pupils who met the standard required in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2016 was below that seen nationally. Leaders have invested in new resources, consultancy support and training for teachers. Teaching now focuses on developing pupils' accuracy and fluency. Pupils are exposed to sounds more systematically and can blend sounds accurately. A very large majority of pupils in Year 1 are now working at the expected standard and this enables them to tackle unfamiliar words when they are reading.
- A new achievement strategy has targeted the underperformance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils at risk of not attaining age-related expectations. This is beginning to support vulnerable pupils to make similar or greater progress when compared with other pupils.
- The most able key stage 1 pupils read accurately, fluently and with expression. The most able Year 6 pupils have positive attitudes to reading and read widely for pleasure. All pupils have effective strategies to support reading, including the use of phonics and the context of the words.
- Weaker readers are making better progress in key stage 2 as a result of planned intervention and one-to-one support. Most-able readers are fluent and expressive, taking account of punctuation and dialogue.
- Boys in key stage 2 are now making better progress in writing and expect to have better attainment than seen in last year's results. However, in key stage 1, boys do not progress as well as girls in writing.
- Leaders have ensured that the school's assessment systems are beginning to provide more precise information for teachers to evaluate their work thoroughly. Pupils in key stage 2 are performing increasingly well and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making better progress than in the past. However, some key stage 1 teachers do not set high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- In 2016, attainment in key stage 1 was close to the national figures for age-related expectations. However, not enough pupils in key stage 1 exceeded age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. Teaching this year reflects a better understanding of the requirements for the most able pupils but current information shows that attainment and progress are not improving rapidly enough.
- In 2016, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development in the early years foundation stage profile was above the national figure. However, not all

pupils are as well prepared for key stage 1 learning as they should be.

- Action to tackle the low rate of progress that some pupils make has not yet had enough time for good practice to become embedded or consistent.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Most children enter the Nursery Year with skills and knowledge well below those typical for their age. There have been some early developments to improve the quality of provision. However, there remains further work to do to ensure that children's progress is accelerated.
- In the Nursery, there is more focus on what children do rather than what they learn. Disadvantaged children do not always make enough progress because adults do not routinely provide enough opportunities to talk about their learning. By contrast, in Reception, during child-initiated activities, children were supported through effective questioning and positive and engaging dialogue. They were also well supported in developing their fine motor skills.
- Early years specialist support is helping school staff to make improvements including recent changes to the outdoor learning area for both the Nursery and Reception classes.
- The new early years leader is perceptive about what needs to improve and is already having a positive impact. There is now a greater focus on language development, phonics and writing in the Reception class.
- Teachers provide regular information to parents on their children's learning. However, this often provides evidence of activities undertaken but teachers do not always track children's development accurately.
- The needs of the most able children are not always met. They make stronger progress when the next steps of learning are sharply focused on developing knowledge and skills, but this is not yet consistent in all classes.
- Any special educational needs and/or disabilities are quickly identified. Speedy interventions and effective partnerships with parents and other agencies ensure that children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported in their learning.
- Children's personal, social and emotional development is a strength and children are happy and well settled in school. Safeguarding is effective in the early years and all statutory welfare requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	140873
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10032481

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	333
Appropriate authority	The governing body, Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership Trust
Chair	Mrs Debbie O'Shea
Headteacher	Mrs Jacqueline Wright
Telephone number	01843 221 896
Website	www.st-gregorys.kent.sch.uk
Email address	office@st-gregorys.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

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.
- This is an above average sized primary school admitting the equivalent of a class and a half each year. This means that some pupils are taught in split year groups.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is greater than that found in most schools. The proportion of those with an education, health and care plan, or a statement of special educational needs, is lower than that found in other schools.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning throughout the school and at times with senior leaders. Inspectors looked at pupils’ work during lessons and through a focused analysis of books.
- Meetings were held with a representative of the trust, governors, senior leaders and middle leaders. Phone call discussions were held with a representative of the Diocesan Schools’ Commission and the chair of the parents’ council.
- Parents’ views were considered through the 72 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, and in conversations with parents at the beginning of the school day.
- The views of staff were considered through the 25 responses to Ofsted’s staff survey and through meetings.
- Pupils’ views were heard through meetings and by talking to pupils around the school.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documents, including leaders’ evaluations of the school’s effectiveness, improvement plans, records of consultancy visits, the trust’s monitoring records, and leaders’ analysis of the quality of teaching, pupils’ progress, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records and the central record of recruitment checks on staff.

Inspection team

Ann McCarthy, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Leah Goulding	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Wibroe	Ofsted Inspector

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