

# St Gregory's Catholic Primary School

Montreal Road, Netherley, Liverpool, Merseyside L27 7AG

## Inspection dates

27–28 November 2018

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	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders and the governing body have successfully steered the school through a challenging period. As a result, the school has recovered quickly following a period of decline in the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Pupils' outcomes are improving but they are not yet good. Despite current pupils making stronger progress than in the past, some pupils, particularly in Years 5 and 6, have gaps in their learning.
- The most able pupils do not achieve as well as they should because the work that they are set often lacks sufficient challenge.
- Significant improvements in the quality of teaching have resulted in most pupils making good progress in a range of subjects.
- Although improving, the teaching of mathematics is weaker than in reading and writing. Teachers do not give pupils enough opportunity to deepen their mathematical knowledge.
- The teaching of phonics has improved. A large majority of pupils now meet the expected standard in the phonics screening check by the time that they leave Year 1.
- The governing body knows the school well. It makes a valuable contribution to school improvement.
- The headteacher, ably assisted by an enthusiastic leadership team, has ensured that all pupils have access to a well-planned and engaging curriculum.
- Safeguarding systems are effective.
- Pupils and their families are provided with strong support to help overcome any difficulties that they may face.
- Pupils' behaviour is orderly throughout the day. They value the friendly ethos that permeates the school. Pupils play and work cooperatively.
- Parents and carers say that their children are happy, feel safe and are well looked after in school.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. This is evident from their improved attendance.
- Children in Reception get off to a good start. This is because of the school's nurturing approach. The adults know each child very well and tailor teaching and learning to ensure that all children enjoy school and achieve well.

## Full report

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

- Improve pupils' outcomes so that recent improvements are sustained and different groups of pupils, especially those in Years 5 and 6, make the progress that they should in order to make a successful start in the next stage of their education by:
  - building on pupils' improved progress in English and mathematics across the school so that pupils' attainment at least matches the national averages by the time pupils leave Year 6
  - ensuring that the most able pupils receive sufficient challenge to enable them to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Improve the quality of teaching in mathematics further so that pupils have greater opportunities to use the recently introduced strategies aimed at deepening their mathematical understanding.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- St Gregory's has been through a turbulent period since the previous inspection. Considerable changes in staffing have had a negative impact on the quality of education and led to a decline in pupils' achievement. However, more stable staffing and effective action by senior leaders has led to clear improvements in the quality of teaching, which in turn, means that pupils currently at the school are making much stronger progress than in the past. Nonetheless, this improved picture has not had an impact on published results for the school and pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics remains below average. Furthermore, many of the most able pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. It is for this reason that pupils' outcomes are not good.
- Senior leaders have steered the school through a challenging period. They have high expectations and their shared desire to tackle the recent decline has led to stronger teaching. Furthermore, they have not allowed the considerable changes in staffing to have a negative impact on pupils' safety, behaviour or enjoyment of school.
- Leaders and governors know their school very well. They use information from their checks on teaching and pupils' learning to identify precise actions to improve the quality of education further.
- Leaders make accurate judgements about the quality of teaching and the impact that this has on pupils' progress. Where any aspect of teaching does not meet their shared high expectations, swift and effective action is put into place to support teachers and secure improvement. Regular and purposeful staff training ensures that teachers have up-to-date knowledge and skills to teach across the primary curriculum. The positive impact of this work is clearly evident in the improved quality of teaching and learning in writing. Teachers who are new to the profession are supported well to make a successful start to their career.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. They ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain by developing pupils' understanding of British values, such as democracy. A culture of respect for all permeates the school. Pupils speak confidently about the importance of tolerance and understanding for other faiths and cultures within society.
- The school's curriculum is broad and engaging. It enables pupils to develop subject-specific skills and knowledge in areas such as science, geography and history. Educational visits are used regularly to enhance pupils' learning. Pupils particularly enjoy the chances that they are all given to take part in outdoor and adventurous activities and residential trips. These opportunities support pupils' physical and personal development well.
- The school provides a very wide range of extra-curricular activities, which many pupils attend and appreciate. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their achievements in these additional activities. For example, during the 'Respect' workshops, pupils debated about how to best meet the needs of disabled pupils when planning sporting activities in school. This demonstrated their understanding of respect for others and a fierce determination to ensure equality of opportunity for all. Pupils also enjoy being involved

in the recycling projects and the many sporting opportunities that the school offers.

- Leaders make good use of additional funding. The physical education and sport premium funding is used well to ensure that pupils have access to a wide range of sporting activities.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide support for disadvantaged pupils' academic needs. It is also targeted at improving their attendance. Strategies, such as providing a breakfast club for these pupils, have brought about a rise in the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. This is having a positive impact on the progress that disadvantaged pupils currently in the school are making in English and mathematics.
- Leaders have a precise overview of the progress of, and provision for, all pupils who have additional needs, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders regularly review this aspect of the school's work to ensure that these pupils make the progress of which they are capable. Outcomes for pupils with SEND show that they are making good progress.
- The pastoral leaders skilfully give advice to teachers about useful support strategies that will meet the needs of individual pupils. They also provide many interventions to support pupils, and families, who have specific needs. The school has a sensory room for pupils who need 'time-out' as well as quiet areas for 'one-to-one' time, as required. This ensures that pupils have a range of support mechanisms to overcome any barriers to learning.
- Parents' views of the school are positive. This comment is typical of those who shared their views with inspectors: 'It's a community school. You feel welcome and children are doing really well.' Staff are proud to work at the school. They endorse leaders' ambitions that pupils achieve well.
- Following the recent dip in pupils' outcomes, leaders have used support from the local authority and a partner school to improve teaching and learning. Although external support is sought when required, the school now has the expertise to improve itself. Teachers and leaders work collaboratively with others in the locality to share good classroom practice and engage in local projects that benefit the pupils.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors understand their strategic role well, holding the headteacher to account for the impact of improvement actions on pupils' outcomes. They maintain an effective oversight of additional funding. They also check the progress of disadvantaged pupils to ensure that the school does its best for this group of pupils.
- Governors are not afraid to challenge, give their views or to make suggestions. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and they are fully aware that there is more to do to ensure that pupils' outcomes are consistently good. Governors are highly ambitious for the school.
- Governors provide a good steer to the school's work and bring a strong level of expertise to the leadership team. They provided good support during the recent turbulence in staffing and during the temporary leadership arrangements.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders, all staff and governors are vigilant in their work to ensure that pupils are safe. Staff know individual pupils well and are quickly alert to their needs. All required policies are in place.
- As the school's designated lead for safeguarding, the headteacher ensures that all staff and governors are trained in line with their responsibilities. Governors oversee their safeguarding duties diligently. They ensure that the school carefully checks all staff and adults who visit the school.
- Leaders work closely with parents and external agencies to ensure that families and pupils access the support that they need. Leaders maintain all records carefully to ensure that they are fit for purpose.
- Pupils say that they feel safe when at school and parents agree with this view.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Recent and marked improvements in teaching, learning and assessment has halted the decline in pupils' progress and attainment at the end of key stage 2. For example, the improvements in the teaching of writing are having a positive impact on pupils' progress in this subject. This is clearly evident in the work in pupils' books.
- Improvements in the teaching of reading are fostering pupils' desire to read. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the books that they select. They enjoy the 'reading challenge', which encourages them to read widely and often.
- The teaching of mathematics has also improved, but the pace of change is not as marked in this area. Teachers do not routinely support pupils to learn from their mistakes. New strategies have been introduced to help pupils to deepen their mathematical thinking. However, teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to try these out to ensure that their mathematical knowledge is secure.
- Teachers ensure that pupils gain subject-specific skills and knowledge across the whole curriculum. They plan interesting topics which capture pupils' enthusiasm for learning. For example, when Year 2 pupils studied 'Bonfire Night', they researched the conflicts at that time in history alongside the role of Parliament. They then put themselves into the role of Guy Fawkes to write about these events from his point of view. Their writing showed an understanding of that period and their understanding of British values today.
- Teachers and support staff use questioning well to encourage pupils to think about what they are learning. Teachers check that pupils understand what is expected of them and offer advice as needed. Pupils say that their teachers' guidance helps them to understand how to improve. They work with positive attitudes and take an interest in the topics covered.
- Teachers know their pupils well. They are using assessment information well to plug any gaps that have emerged in pupils' learning during a period of staffing instability. This accounts for pupils' improving progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Nonetheless, teachers are less skilled in ensuring that the most able pupils receive the challenge that they need to make the progress of which they are capable.

- Parents appreciate the accurate information that teachers provide about their children's progress. They welcome knowing what their child needs to do to improve.

## 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 for others. They understand fairness and equalities. For example, when all the elected school council representatives were girls, they decided that boys' voices needed to be heard. The number of representatives was increased to embrace the views of different groups of pupils. Similarly, older pupils understand that there are different types of bullying. They know it is unjust that people are bullied because of their characteristics and are confident that bullying is rare in school.
- Pupils say that there are very few incidents of 'falling out' and that they can talk to their teachers easily if they have any concerns. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe and healthy, for example when they are online or out in the community.
- Adults model positive relationships and encourage pupils to keep fit, healthy and safe through assemblies and the wider curriculum. British values are similarly promoted and feature within some of the school's topics and events, such as Remembrance Sunday. Pupils spoke proudly about displaying their knowledge of past British events and how they impact on their lives today.
- Pupils are respected as individuals within the school's nurturing ethos. Pupils listen carefully to each other and to their teachers, which supports them to achieve well. They work hard and concentrate on their learning tasks.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The social and emotional needs of some pupils who require additional support is managed well. Over time, pupils who find managing their own behaviour difficult learn to change their responses to situations. This helps them to become increasingly successful learners.
- Pupils report that there are very few incidents of inappropriate behaviour. All incidents are recorded, and leaders make good use of the information to improve the school's understanding and management of behaviour.
- Leaders promote pupils' regular attendance, which is currently higher than in other schools nationally. Leaders have worked effectively to reduce persistent absence. However, despite leaders' successful work in this area, there remains a small number of pupils who are persistently absent.
- Pupils are polite and friendly. Behaviour is good during lessons, at breaktimes and when pupils move around the school. Pupils show respect for the school's rules and

enjoy being part of this welcoming community. Older pupils provide good role models by acting as monitors, for example by reminding younger children of the school's expectations at key times of the day.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Since the school's last inspection there has been a decline in attainment at the end of key stage 2. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics were in the bottom 20% of all schools for the past two years. The results of national tests and assessments showed pupils' progress across key stage 2 also declined sharply. It has typically been well below the national average. Considerable staffing instability had a negative impact on pupils' achievement during this period.
- Increased stability in staffing, alongside much improved teaching, is reversing the historically weak outcomes for pupils. As a result, current pupils are making much stronger progress in a range of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics, than those pupils who left the school in previous years. Nonetheless, weaker teaching in the past means that some pupils, especially those in Years 5 and 6, have gaps in their learning. As a result, these pupils are not working at the standard that the school expects for their age or ability.
- Over time, the most able pupils have not made sufficient progress to ensure that they achieve as well as they should given their capabilities. Current information indicates that the progress of this group remains uneven across different subjects.
- In 2018, pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 improved to be broadly in line with the national average in reading and mathematics. This means that these pupils were able to make a positive start when they joined Year 3. Standards in writing, although improving, were not as strong. Evidence reviewed during the inspection confirms that the improvements in key stage 1 are being sustained in reading and mathematics and that pupils are making good progress in writing.
- Improved teaching of phonics means that the proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check matches the national average.
- Pupils with SEND make good progress from their different starting points because they are well supported and work is accurately matched to their learning needs.
- Disadvantaged pupils are also making strong progress. However, like other pupils in key stage 2, they have gaps in their learning which still need to be overcome. Highly focused support from the senior leaders and additional adults is making a positive contribution to the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils are also making stronger progress across other subject areas. For example, pupils plan fair tests in science, use historical research to gain an understanding of a time in the past and learn mapping skills in geography.



## Early years provision

**Good**

- Many children start school with skills that are broadly typical for their age. However, there is a large proportion whose skills are below those typical for their age. The number of children leaving Reception having reached a good level of development is rising and close to the national average. This represents good progress over time. Children are well prepared for their learning in Year 1.
- St Gregory's two-year-old provision is a special place of calm and learning and it offers a warm welcoming atmosphere for both children and parents.
- Behaviour in early years is good. Adults have a consistent approach to behaviour management, which children respond to very well. Children are clear about the expectations related to behaviour and even the youngest, many who have only recently started in Nursery in the two- and three-year-old rooms, behave well.
- Staff interact well with children, speaking to them clearly and modelling correct spoken language. This helps the children to settle and feel safe in early years. It also supports their language development.
- Teaching is good. Effective and well-targeted teaching of phonics in the Reception classes ensures that children get off to a good start with developing their phonics knowledge.
- Every day there is a dedicated focus on developing children's reading, writing and mathematical skills. This helps children to make good progress in these areas. Adults make use of their detailed day-to-day assessments to plan next steps meticulously.
- The early years team has a very secure understanding of the curriculum and they know each child as an individual. Teaching is supported by the expertise of strong teaching support. Together, they ensure that teaching nurtures and engages children so that they develop skills well across all areas of learning.
- Children enjoy a broad range of experiences and are encouraged to be imaginative and collaborative in their exciting environment. They develop effective communication skills and self-confidence by learning through the play that they have planned for themselves. During these activities, adults ask perceptive questions to extend their learning.
- Leadership is effective. Leaders have an honest and accurate view of standards in early years. They plan well for their children's needs and children like the topics that are central to the curriculum. Teachers plan interesting activities linked to these topics to support children's play, as well as to challenge their thinking.
- Safeguarding is effective, with all adults having a good understanding of the specific requirements for the safety of young children. The classes in the early years departments have rules that are easy for the children to understand and these are strongly promoted. These help the children to look after themselves and each other.
- Parents are very happy about the way in which their children settle to school, enjoy learning and make progress. They appreciate having regular communication that recognises their children's achievement, as well as the opportunities to visit and even to act as classroom helpers.



## School details

Unique reference number	104678
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10045766

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	245
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Maureen Russell
Headteacher	Paula Roberts
Telephone number	0151 498 4313
Website	<a href="http://www.stgregorysliverpool.co.uk">www.stgregorysliverpool.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:gregory-ao@st-gregorys.liverpool.sch.uk">gregory-ao@st-gregorys.liverpool.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	3–4 December 2013

## Information about this school

- The number of pupils on roll at St Gregory's is just under the national average.
- The number of pupils in receipt of free school meals is double the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND across the school is around average.
- The school has experienced some turbulence in staffing since the previous inspection. A number of middle leaders are relatively new to post.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors analysed pupils' work in their books during visits to classrooms. Inspectors carried out a further scrutiny of pupils' books and looked at some books jointly with the deputy headteacher.
- An inspector listened to children read from Years 2 and 6.
- Discussions were held with staff, pupils, governors, the school's improvement partner and a representative from the Archdiocese.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school's summary of its view of its own performance, improvement plans, information on pupils' progress, records of pupils' behaviour and attendance, documents relating to safeguarding and governing body minutes.
- Parents' views were considered through the 22 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors held conversations with parents as they brought their children to school in the morning or collected them at the end of the school day. Inspectors also considered the 21 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Moira Atkins, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jane Eccleston

Ofsted Inspector

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