

St Gabriel's RC High School

Bridge Road, Bury, Lancashire BL9 0TZ

Inspection dates

12–13 February 2019

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- This school has been in decline over a number of years. Leaders were too slow to recognise the deterioration and, when they did, they did not have the capacity to address the school's plight.
- A lack of accountability at all levels has accelerated the school's decline.
- Under the acting headteacher, leaders have begun to address some of the weaknesses. However, the current group of leaders lack the knowledge, skills and experience to make the improvements that are necessary.
- Leaders continue to have an overgenerous view of the school's effectiveness. Although they acknowledge many of the weaknesses, their low expectations and weak systems for monitoring the school's work prevent them from seeing the widespread inadequacies.
- Sustained weak leadership has resulted in some pupils, particularly boys and disadvantaged pupils, making poor progress over the past three years.
- Teaching overall is inadequate. Leaders have not given teachers clear enough guidance on how to teach more effectively. As a result, teaching does not meet pupils' needs. This leads to many pupils making poor progress.
- Most teachers have low expectations of pupils. This inhibits the progress that pupils make.
- Teachers do not provide effective support to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This hinders the progress of these pupils.
- The school has a strong Catholic ethos. However, it has failed to impart many of its values to a substantial number of boys. Their poor behaviour and attitudes are having a very detrimental impact, which exacerbates weaknesses in the school's culture.
- Leaders are in the early stages of reforming the curriculum which has not been meeting the needs of all pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- Pastoral care is strong. An extensive range of care systems and strategies ensures that pupils are well looked after and safe, including those pupils who have complex needs.
- Most pupils attend school regularly.
- Governors have recently reviewed their effectiveness. As a result, they are beginning to hold leaders to account more effectively.
- Pupils benefit from strong and effective careers education, information, advice and guidance.

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?

- Significantly develop the quality of leadership and management at all levels so that teaching and pupils' outcomes rapidly improve by ensuring that:
 - leaders at all levels have the knowledge, skills and understanding to improve the quality of education in their areas
 - leaders communicate a clear vision for the school, which is underpinned by high expectations, to staff, pupils, parents and carers
 - leaders improve their evaluation of the school's work so that they gain an accurate view of the school's effectiveness and are able to hold staff at all levels to account for the quality of pupils' learning
 - the criteria leaders use to measure the impact of their improvement strategies are closely linked to pupils' achievements and personal development
 - teachers receive the careful guidance, advice and training that will enable them to plan learning that caters effectively for pupils' needs
 - teachers are supported to develop higher expectations of what pupils, particularly boys and disadvantaged pupils, are capable of achieving
 - all pupils, particularly boys, are supported to embrace the school's ethos and values so that behaviour out of lessons improves and pupils develop consistently positive attitudes to their learning in the classroom
 - teachers provide pupils with SEND with the support that they need to learn well
 - leaders continue to develop the curriculum in order to better meet the needs of all pupils and strengthen provision for their personal development
 - leaders use the findings of the recent review of the pupil premium to improve rapidly the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The school has declined since the last inspection. Leaders have allowed standards of teaching to drop and pupils' achievement to decline. Sustained weak teaching has led to many pupils making progress that has been significantly below that of their peers for a number of years and across a range of subjects. Governors, the diocese and the local authority were all slow to spot the decline, and so did not hold senior leaders to account for their failings for far too long.
- By the time the acting headteacher took up his post in January 2018, there were deep-rooted weaknesses in leadership, teaching and pupils' behaviour. Although the current senior leadership team realised that the school was not as good as it once was, it was not aware of the extent of its decline. Leaders at all levels lack the knowledge, skills and experience to bring about the required rapid improvement.
- Until recently, leaders have focused too much on the attainment of pupils at the end of Year 11. Since pupils tend to start at this school having attained well in their primary school, their levels of attainment on leaving St Gabriel's have not been significantly weak. However, this has masked the fact that many pupils have made weak progress given their starting points.
- Senior leaders now gather detailed data from teachers on how well pupils are achieving. However, leaders fail to convert this into useful information that would help them form an accurate evaluation of how well pupils are learning. Leaders at all levels, including those in the middle tier of leadership, do not accurately evaluate the impact of their work, so they are not in a position to celebrate what works well or quickly improve what is not.
- Leaders have recently adopted a more strategic approach to improving the school through the production of a detailed improvement plan. While they have identified accurately areas to improve, leaders have not made it clear how much improvement is expected in terms of pupils' progress and their personal development. This limits leaders' opportunities to hold others to account for their responsibilities.
- Leaders lack an understanding of teaching strategies to support pupils from differing social and economic backgrounds, and those from different prior-ability groups. This has led to low expectations and weak teaching for different groups of pupils.
- The training teachers receive to help them improve their classroom practice is getting better. However, the programme lacks urgency and ambition and so the impact of this training is not improving teaching quickly enough. Leaders are not doing enough to tackle poor teaching. Leaders' evaluations of the quality of teaching are overly generous and they do not give good advice to individuals on how to improve.
- Leadership of pastoral care is a strength of the school. The middle tier of pastoral leaders is clear about its responsibilities and makes an important contribution to the high levels of care that pupils experience. This, however, is in contrast with other middle leaders who are vague about what is expected of them and how they should drive up the quality of teaching and improve pupils' outcomes.
- There are aspects of this school where its spiritual and moral ethos is evident. The best

example is in the care staff provide for all pupils. However, the school is failing to create a culture where pupils, mainly boys, show the same levels of care and respect to each other and to adults. Too many pupils are not inspired to have high expectations of what they can achieve and how well they should behave.

- The behaviour of a substantial number of pupils during their social times is unacceptably poor. Some pupils show defiance when challenged by staff. There is a culture during social times which can be intimidating.
- Leaders can provide some examples of where targeted support has helped some pupils to improve their attitudes to learning and behaviour. For example, during the 12 months preceding the acting headteacher's appointment, there were 10 pupils excluded permanently but since then there has been none. This reflects a change in the school's policy on how to help pupils reform. However, the use of temporary exclusions continues to be high.
- A drive to improve behaviour in classrooms has begun to show benefits. According to pupils, they experience less low-level disruption during lessons. Pupils welcome new approaches to rewarding good behaviour, attitudes and learning.
- Leaders have begun to reform the curriculum. In the past, the offer at key stage 4 was mostly academic. Leaders have recognised that this did not meet the needs of some pupils. As a result, they have introduced a wider range of vocational courses to offer different pathways.
- Some staff have suggested that the large number of pupils taking GCSEs in three separate sciences has been responsible for the weak progress scores in recent years. Achievement in science is poor because teaching has not been good enough and there has been insufficient attention to ensuring that the right pupils are placed on the triple science route. Similarly, there is evidence that pupils' aspirations and abilities have not been considered sufficiently well when guiding them on their GCSE choices.
- Working with the local authority, the school is quickly improving English teachers' understanding of how English is taught in primary schools. This has enabled English teachers of Year 7 pupils to plan their curriculum so that it builds on what pupils have learned previously. The school is at an early stage of adopting the same strategy to support teachers of mathematics.
- The additional funding the school is receiving for disadvantaged pupils is not being well spent as it is not helping to improve the progress of these pupils. The school also receives additional funding to help Year 7 pupils with low attainment in literacy and numeracy to catch up. Leaders use this fund to provide additional support; however, leaders are not clear on how effective this provision is. The additional funding that the school receives for pupils with SEND is used to provide these pupils with good levels of care. However, weak understanding by teachers on how to help these pupils to learn well limits their progress.
- Information provided to parents about how well their children are performing in school is clear and frequent. Those parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's parental survey, indicated that they are generally happy with the school. They typically think that their children are well cared for.
- The advice and guidance that pupils receive on how they can best achieve their aspirations are considerable strengths of the school. Care is taken to ensure that most

pupils, by the end of Year 10, have a clear understanding of the direction that they want their education and training to follow. As a result, the number of pupils failing to secure a place in education, employment or training is very small.

- The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Governance of the school

- Governors are partly responsible for the considerable decline of the school. However, they were the first group associated with the school to recognise how weak it had become. In recent months they have undergone a review of their practices and how those have contributed to the school's decline. They consulted on how to improve governance. As a result, they have reformed. The governing body is now smaller and has fewer committees. Governors are now much more focused on challenging leaders. Key personnel changes include a new chair. Governors have reviewed the skills within the group and recruited new members to include those with experience in managing and evaluating schools.
- This reformed governing body has brought a much greater sense of realism about how effective the school is. Although only recently reformed, the governing body is already demonstrating its capacity to challenge the school's leadership team to improve. They are firmly focused on improving leadership and teaching so that pupils' progress and behaviour improve rapidly.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding, including the training and recruitment of staff, meet requirements.
- There is a core team of staff with a detailed knowledge of those pupils who have complex needs, many of whom need additional support to be safe. These members of staff are vigilant and have effective working partnerships with other agencies that also have responsibilities for safeguarding children. Members of the safeguarding team constantly review the effectiveness of their work and if improvements are needed, they implement changes promptly.
- All staff know how to identify possible signs of abuse. They also know how they should respond if they have concerns. Pupils too play an important role in safeguarding. They report concerns that they have to members of staff.
- Physical aspects of the buildings and site present significant problems for leaders to overcome, both in terms of ensuring that the site is safe and secure, and in ensuring that pupils learn and socialise in a conducive environment. By the end of the inspection, leaders had strengthened their systems for ensuring that the site is safe and secure.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching and learning over time is inadequate. Across a range of subjects and year groups, the expectations that many teachers have of their pupils are too low. This contributes to the poor progress that pupils make. Teachers' expectations of boys and disadvantaged pupils are particularly low.
- Too often, teachers accept work from boys that is inaccurate, slapdash and/or incomplete. Generally, girls take much more pride in their work and it is of a much higher standard. As a result of teachers' variable expectations of different groups, teaching does not promote equality of opportunity effectively.
- Teachers in some subjects do not assess pupils' work in line with the school's policy. This contributes to pupils' poor progress because only some pupils are directed to improve their work in some subjects.
- Some teachers do not have a sufficient grasp of the curriculum that they are expected to teach. This means that some teaching fails to ensure that pupils' learning is built systematically on previous learning.
- The professional standards of a few teachers are far too low. This means that, at times, teaching does little to address the poor attitudes of some pupils. For example, some teachers allow pupils to stop learning well before the end of lessons. Some let their pupils out of their classrooms far too early.
- Few teachers, across a range of subjects, consistently address the literacy errors that pupils make in their work.
- Teachers set homework regularly. Key stage 4 pupils in mathematics are set work that they find very helpful and teachers ensure that pupils correct any errors in this work. This helps to address misconceptions that pupils may have.
- Teachers are often not clear about what they should expect of pupils with SEND. Nor are teachers clear about how to support these pupils. This contributes to the poor progress that some pupils with SEND make over time.
- Where teachers have high expectations of pupils, progress is much stronger. This is evident in geography and some aspects of technology.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils in the school are very well looked after. Staff show a very caring approach to all pupils and those with very complex needs are looked after particularly well. The support that pupils receive to promote their mental health is improving quickly. For example, some pupils have been trained to become mental health ambassadors.
- Pupils are taught how to be safe in many different circumstances. Although pupils say that bullying is dealt with well, a substantial minority of boys display intimidating behaviour as they move around the school.
- There are many charming pupils in this school. Many take advantage of the wide range

of opportunities to promote their leadership skills and personal development.

- Despite this, pupils' personal development requires improvement. The school has failed to prevent the emergence of a disrespectful culture among some pupils, who display immature behaviour and a lack of consideration for others. In this respect, such pupils are not well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Leaders have introduced systems intended to improve the behaviour and attitudes of pupils during lessons. Pupils say that behaviour is much better now in their classes. There are fewer incidents of low-level disruption. Pupils respond positively to the new rewards systems. Pupils are clear about the sequence of reprimands that teachers should issue if behaviour is not good enough.
- A substantial proportion of pupils have poor attitudes towards their learning. Large groups of pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable because they do not engage well with their learning. Too few pupils show pride in their work and an ambition to succeed. Those that do tend to be girls.
- Around the school, behaviour is poor. Some pupils are very disrespectful to adults; they openly defy staff, including senior staff. Swearing and the use of bad language is common. However, Year 7 pupils say that they feel safe when in their own playground.
- Pupils show little respect for their environment. Litter is widespread across the site. The problem of litter is exacerbated by the lack of space in the school canteen area requiring pupils to consume food elsewhere. Careless use of doors frequently results in broken locks.
- Pupils openly defy school policies, including those regarding uniform and those prohibiting fizzy, sugary drinks and the use of mobile phones.
- Generally, pupils attend school well. Attendance rates are broadly in line with the national average. However, large numbers of pupils are slow when moving to lessons. Encouragement from staff makes little difference. As a result, the punctuality of many pupils to lessons is poor.
- A very small number of pupils attend alternative provision for part of their curriculum. Leaders ensure that pupils attend these sessions regularly, are safe and behave well. However, leaders are not sufficiently aware of the progress that these pupils are making.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Pupils' progress, across a number of subjects, has deteriorated over time. The overall progress made by pupils leaving Year 11 in 2016 and 2018 was significantly below average. In 2018, disadvantaged pupils' progress was very weak.

- Pupils leaving Year 11 in 2016 and 2018 who had attained high standards in their primary schools had made weak progress during their time at St Gabriel's.
- Pupils' progress has been better in English, humanities and modern foreign languages than in other subjects during this period of decline.
- The progress of pupils currently in Year 11 is mixed. Pupils make stronger progress in English than they do in mathematics and science. The progress of disadvantaged pupils and that of the most able pupils is very weak. Boys also continue to make far less progress than girls.
- Over the past two years and currently, the progress of pupils with low prior attainment has been improving. In contrast, some pupils with SEND have made slow progress over time.
- Since they started in the school, pupils currently in Year 9 have made weak progress. The progress made by Year 9 disadvantaged pupils is particularly poor. As in other year groups, boys are underperforming considerably, particularly in English.
- Although some pupils are well prepared for the next stages in their education, many pupils continue to underachieve across the curriculum. A substantial minority of pupils have a poor attitude to learning. They lack essential social skills and show little consideration for others.

School details

Unique reference number	105367
Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	10052864

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,083
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kevin Coen
Headteacher (acting)	Adam Loster
Telephone number	01617 643186
Website	www.st-gabriels.org.uk
Email address	stgabriels@bury.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	September 2011

Information about this school

- St Gabriel's RC High School is an average-sized secondary school. A smaller proportion of pupils with lower prior attainment than is typical join this school.
- The school is a member of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Salford. It was last inspected under section 48 of the relevant Education Act on 10 October 2016. The purpose of this inspection was to evaluate the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school's religious character.
- The current headteacher has been in an acting role because the substantive headteacher was on secondment from January 2018 and then left the school in August 2018.
- The school uses two providers of alternative education. Small numbers of pupils attend Bury College and Myerscough College, all on a part-time basis.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the acting headteacher and other leaders and managers. The lead inspector met with four members of the governing body, one of whom is also the chair.
- The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority and spoke to a representative of the diocese.
- Inspectors met with three groups of pupils. They also talked to and observed pupils during their social times.
- Inspectors met with two groups of teachers and also spoke to individual teachers.
- School documents were scrutinised, including safeguarding checks and information about pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors visited classrooms, sometimes with leaders, to speak with pupils, look at their work and observe their learning.
- With a school leader, inspectors scrutinised a sample of pupils' work from different subjects and year groups.
- The headteacher and other senior leaders were involved in some of the inspection activities.
- The school received two communications from parents, which were passed to the lead inspector during the inspection. There were 188 responses to Parent View, which inspectors took into consideration.

Inspection team

Neil Mackenzie, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Tuesday Humby	Ofsted Inspector
Stephanie Gill	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector
Tracey Greenough	Ofsted Inspector
Timothy Gartside	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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Manchester
M1 2WD

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