

Inspection of St Gregory the Great Catholic School

Cricket Road, Cowley, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX4 3DR

Inspection dates: 15–16 October 2019

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Good

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' experiences at this school are defined by which phase they are in. Some pupils get a good deal and others don't. Primary-aged pupils are happy, settled and learning well. In this phase, teachers have high expectations and support pupils to give of their best. On the other hand, teachers' expectations of older pupils are too low. Key stage 3 pupils told us that they want their teachers to expect more of them.

Pupils are safe, and staff are caring. However, pupils say that they are not treated fairly in this school.

Overall there have been some notable improvements to behaviour. Sixth formers told us this is because their teachers are stricter. However, there is still much more to do. Older pupils are concerned about regular disruption to their learning. They also say that bullying occurs sometimes.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

This is a school that is slightly better than it used to be but is still not good enough. Over a protracted period, directors of the Dominic Barberi Multi Academy Company (DBMAC) have not ensured that the quality of leadership is proficient enough to take the school forward. Directors, governors and the executive principal have not united leaders towards common goals. Leaders do not act as a cohesive team, and long-standing tensions are all too obvious. Secondary leadership is now bolstered by the work of external consultants. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this additional help. Nevertheless, some staff are optimistic that, if this support were to stick, the school could improve.

Directors have not instigated a compelling momentum for change. Staff are frustrated and disheartened. Many are exhausted by the high level of scrutiny the school has faced due to changing leadership and advice. Some are more robust and have stuck to the task. Marginal gains are down to the dogged resilience of some staff who want things to improve for pupils. However, improvement is fragile and not far-reaching enough. Too many pupils still have a poor experience of their schooling. Pupils' attendance is low, and persistent absence too high.

The quality of education on offer is inadequate. Leaders' lack of ambition over several years is to blame. Recently, in secondary, new curriculum plans have been introduced in most subjects. However, this work is in its infancy. In the core subjects, curriculum plans are not appropriately sequenced. Pupils' chances of success are further impeded by previous and ongoing weak teaching. Many pupils do not retain what needs to be remembered. Pupils end up repeating work from previous learning and do not move on quickly enough. The quality of teaching for older pupils is often adversely affected by cover arrangements or staff working out of their specialism. Pupils in key stage 3 do not receive a full curriculum and staff do

not build well enough on what has gone before. Standards in key stages 3 and 4 are too low.

Subject leadership in the primary phase and sixth form is much stronger. The curriculum is sequenced appropriately. Leaders make careful choices over the selection and deployment of resources to facilitate effective learning. In these phases, pupils' outcomes, including for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are stronger.

Leaders ensure that students in the sixth form are well supported. Most teachers are skilled in their specialist subjects. Staff regularly provide students with helpful guidance about how to improve work. Students respond well, because many have high aspirations. Most find suitable placements at university, employment or training, when they leave. Although the curriculum is effective within individual subjects, there are weaknesses in the depth and range of the non-examined learning opportunities on offer in the sixth form. For example, there are only very limited opportunities for students to take on responsibility and develop their leadership skills.

Children in the early years get off to a good start. Staff know the children well and work tirelessly to develop children's language skills, often from very low starting points. Leaders in the primary phase say that, for many pupils, including the disadvantaged, reading is the gateway to future success. Leaders in both the primary and secondary phases understand the vital importance of reading. They are implementing strategies to build on pupils' reading skills in key stage 3. These initiatives are welcome, as many pupils have ground to make up. Leaders know that some pupils, including those with SEND, are not developing their reading skills rapidly enough.

Everyone is working hard to improve pupils' behaviour. The school is now under better control than it used to be. However, in secondary, pupils' learning is sometimes disrupted. In some phases, the more settled teaching arrangements mean that pupils better understand adults' expectations. The school is working hard to reduce bullying, and there is not as much as there was. However, older pupils say that, if you are new to the school, life can be difficult. Some pupils say that bullying stops when you reach the sixth form.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Procedures have much improved since the last inspection. This is because leaders across the school have worked together on this aspect. They have also wisely sought and acted on external advice. Safeguarding leaders know what they are doing. Staff are trained in safeguarding and know what to look out for. Better systems have been set up to spot when pupils might be at risk. When extra help is needed, the safeguarding leaders initiate meetings with the right people in other organisations. The school now has strong links with the local authority's children's services and the police.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Directors, governors and leaders across different phases have not worked well together. Strong governance and clear senior leadership are needed to unite staff and develop a positive all-through school culture. Responsible personnel should ensure that better planning enables more effective targeting of resources on actions that will make the greatest impact. This is needed to ensure that staff morale improves and staff absence reduces.
- The school's key stage 3 curriculum is too narrow. Pupils do not receive their entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum. Leaders should ensure that subjects such as computing and music are taught regularly. Some subjects in the secondary phase are poorly planned. Some teachers lack the subject-specific expertise necessary. Leaders should improve the quality of teaching in the secondary phase so that pupils catch up quickly.
- Leaders must continue to place greater emphasis on improving secondary-aged pupils' reading skills. Leaders and teachers should make sure that pupils, including those with SEND, receive the support that they require to catch up.
- Pupils' behaviour in the secondary years is not good enough. Leaders should ensure that staff are supported to manage pupils' behaviour and reduce the number of negative incidents.
- Leaders provide effective careers guidance for sixth formers but are less proactive in promoting other aspects of their personal development. The 16 to 19 study programmes need a more diverse range of enrichment and extension activities to maximise the progress students make.
- Some pupils report that bullying incidents are too high in key stages 3 and 4. Leaders should ensure that the number of incidents reduces.
- It is recommended that the school does not appoint any newly qualified teachers.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	139528
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10088091
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1125
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	129
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Concannon
Principal	Fraser Long (executive principal)
Website	www.stgregory.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 March 2017

Information about this school

- Since the last full inspection, there have been many changes to the leadership of the school. The previous principal left. Since then, the executive principal of the Dominic Barberi Multi Academy Company provides overall leadership for the primary and the secondary provision. He works in the school one day per week.
- In April 2019, the acting headteacher was appointed as permanent head of the secondary school. At the same time, the key stage 1 and 2 phase leaders were appointed as assistant headteachers in the primary phase. The primary headteacher has been in post since the last inspection.
- Plans for the school to move to the Pope Francis Catholic Multi Academy Company (PFCMAC) have been in place for over a year. No firm date has been set for when this will happen. Some trustees, known as directors, of DBMAC are also directors of PFCMAC. Both multi-academy companies share the same chief executive officer, referred to as the chair of the board. The executive principal is a director of both trusts. The chair of the school improvement board is a director of DBMAC.

- The school's early years department includes a Nursery Year, which children attend on a full- or part-time basis, and a Reception Year, which children attend on a full-time basis.
- A small number of secondary-aged pupils attend alternative provision at Meadowbrook College, TRAX Oxfordshire motor project and Trax and the City of Oxford College.
- The designated religious character of the school is Roman Catholic. The school was inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in October 2016.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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.

- Inspectors met with the executive principal, the primary headteacher, the secondary headteacher and the secondary deputy headteacher. A variety of meetings were conducted with other leaders, including those responsible for pupils' attendance and heads of departments.
- The executive principal also met with inspectors in his capacity as a director of DBMAC. A meeting was held with five members of the school improvement board, including the chair. Some members also act as directors of DBMAC. A telephone call was held with a governor.
- During the inspection the early years leader was absent. Some teaching staff were absent.
- To check on the quality of education, we did deep dives in these subjects: reading, English, mathematics, science, geography, modern foreign languages and history. Inspectors met with staff with responsibility for specific subjects or phases, visited lessons in all phases, talked to pupils about their work and discussed the school's approach to curriculum delivery with teaching staff. Some Year 2 and Year 3 pupils read to an inspector.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements were reviewed. Inspectors met with the school's designated safeguarding leads, scrutinised the school's single central record and talked to pupils about safety. Inspectors also considered how well adults in the school act on emerging concerns about pupils' welfare.
- Links to the pupil and staff surveys were not circulated on day 1 of the inspection. The lead inspector arranged an extension to the surveys to enable staff and pupils to respond. During the inspection, survey responses from 67 members of staff, 42 pupils and 42 parents and carers were considered. Three parents submitted their views via telephone calls. Pupils also met with the lead inspector to share their views.

Inspection team

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