

Inspection of a good school: St Gregory's Catholic Academy

Ragpath Lane, Stockton-on-Tees TS19 9AD

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 May 2022

Outcome

St Gregory's Catholic Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St Gregory's laugh and smile. They say that they feel safe and well looked after by staff. A pupil commented that, 'It's exciting to come to school and see your friends.' They enjoy attending school. At breaktime, pupils talk with the adults. Younger and older pupils play games together. There are secure, strong relationships between pupils and adults.

Staff have high expectations for all pupils. In classrooms, there is a calm, purposeful atmosphere. Pupils respond consistently well to high expectations. Pupils can learn without disruption. They show mutual respect for their peers and encourage everyone to do their best. Pupils are polite, well mannered and thoughtful.

Pupils say that they know what bullying is. One pupil commented, 'You can have cyber-, emotional and physical bullying, but it doesn't happen here.' This reflected the views of many. Pupils are confident that adults would always step in to help if it did.

Pupils are aware of the school's values and appreciate how 'being responsible, showing respect, creating community and promoting human development' all help to develop them as individuals. Pupil well-being ambassadors play an important role in supporting their peers. One ambassador pointed out that the best part of the role is 'helping people and making people feel better about how they are feeling.'

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

Leaders at school and trust level work effectively together. Specialist staff from primary and secondary schools across the trust have designed subject curriculums that are ambitious and well sequenced. Leaders at St Gregory's have skilfully adapted curriculum plans to meet the needs of their pupils. As this is a one-form-entry school, leaders have ensured that the important knowledge pupils need to know is planned into each year group. For example, in history, leaders have selected three units of study for each year, which help pupils secure historical knowledge. This is underpinned by a thread of four

historical concepts that run from Nursery to Year 6: chronology; thinking like a historian; communicating history; and investigating the past.

Reading forms the backbone of the school curriculum. Pupils are given lots of opportunities to read in different subjects. The curriculum in key stage 2 has dedicated lessons to develop broader reading skills, such as vocabulary, inference and retrieval. These skills are often taught using high-quality extracts from history, geography and science texts.

Pupils at the early stages of reading learn how to sound out and blend letters in a step-by-step way. In Nursery, children spend time listening to and becoming familiar with individual letter sounds. As children move into Reception and key stage 1, the curriculum becomes more formal, with daily lessons. Pupils who need extra support are quickly identified and given the support they need to help them keep up and not fall behind. Although the reading curriculum is effectively organised, the way in which it is delivered by staff is not consistent. This means that some pupils are receiving higher quality input from staff than others.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Leaders have created a culture of tolerance, understanding and respect. Staff manage pupils with additional needs with skill and consideration. The consistent use of praise, rewards and sanctions means that pupils can focus on their learning and teachers can deliver the curriculum successfully.

Subject leaders and teachers work in partnership with the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). They make sure that appropriate provision is available and suitable adaptations are made to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This could include pre-teaching of specific vocabulary, adapted resources or adult support. Pupils with SEND achieve well and access a broad, ambitious curriculum.

Teachers regularly check what pupils do and do not know. They make sure that pupils recap, revisit and retrieve vital knowledge on a frequent basis. This helps pupils to remember what they have studied and then to apply this knowledge in different contexts. In mathematics, pupils who were learning division spoke about the importance of knowing their times tables and how this prior knowledge helps them. However, assessment in reading could be more precise. Some pupils read books that are too difficult and this affects their ability to read fluently.

The curriculum is enhanced by local trips that excite and engage pupils. To support pupils' personal development, leaders encourage pupils to be part of school life. Pupils take on roles of responsibility, such as school council representatives and well-being ambassadors. This not only helps to develop their leadership skills, but also shows pupils how they can help others.

Trustees, governors and school leaders share the same vision. They see the trust and the Catholic values of the school as vital building blocks for their pupils' future. They understand the important role the school plays in the local community. There is a genuine duty of care towards pupils and families. Trust leaders are determined that expertise in

the trust is shared effectively. They have designed centralised systems to support school leaders, but ensure that school leaders have the autonomy to make their own decisions.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The team of designated safeguarding leads (DSLs), which includes the well-being leaders, plays a vital role at school. They provide sanctuary, a listening ear and advice to parents and carers. When difficult conversations are required, leaders make sure that these happen. Referrals for additional support are recorded effectively, with the correct agencies contacted for specific support.

The strong leadership of safeguarding is reflected by the vigilance of the staff. They know how to spot any signs of concern and the importance of communicating this information to the DSL team. Leaders have created safe reporting mechanisms for pupils if they have a worry. Pupils know that there is always a person to talk to, and they appreciate the access they have to the well-being room. Pupils know that if they share a concern, they will receive support.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The implementation of the reading curriculum is not consistent. Some pupils do not develop their reading knowledge quickly enough. Some pupils are given reading books that are not appropriately matched to their needs. Leaders should ensure that all staff are trained so that a high-quality curriculum is delivered for all pupils.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 2017.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View

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 are the school and you are 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	139492
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	10227143
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	252
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Maura Regan
Headteacher	Marie Best
Website	www.stgregorys.bhcet.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 and 5 April 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have both been appointed since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector did deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector spoke to leaders about the curriculum and met with teachers from the lessons visited. The inspector looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils.
- The inspector listened to a range of pupils from different year groups read.
- The inspector met with the SENCo and members of the trust board, as well as speaking to the diocesan acting deputy director of education for Hexham and Newcastle schools.

- The inspector looked at the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks and spoke to leaders, teachers, trustees and pupils about safeguarding.
- The inspector considered the 76 responses made by parents to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, plus 75 free-text responses.

Inspection team

David Milligan, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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