

# Inspection of an outstanding school: St Gregory's Catholic Academy

Spring Garden Road, Longton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST3 2QN

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Inspection dates: 13 and 14 June 2023

## Outcome

St Gregory's Catholic Academy continues to be an outstanding school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, and their parents and carers, are proud to be part of this exceptional school. Pupils come from a diverse range of backgrounds. They embrace each other's differences. Staff help all pupils to flourish and grow. One parent's comment, typical of many, stated that, 'The staff are invested in the children's development and genuinely care. They are not only educated but become well-rounded, polite, caring and kind children, setting them up for future life.'

All pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve extremely well. Staff have exceptionally high expectations of pupils. Pupils feel empowered to tackle new challenges with great confidence.

Pupils like going to school and feel safe. They want to learn and be successful. They enjoy the visits and visitors that help to bring their learning to life in subjects such as history. Pupils feel that these experiences help them to remember what they have learned.

Pupils' behaviour across the school is exemplary. The school's motto, 'Service before self', is evident in all aspects of school life. Pupils trust adults to sort out any problems that they have. Bullying is rare. Pupils know that adults will deal with any incidents sensitively but thoroughly.

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

Leaders at this school want every pupil to leave with the best chance of success. Leaders and staff raise aspirations for all. Pupils benefit from an extensive range of opportunities that aid their personal development. By the time pupils leave in Year 6, they have all had an opportunity to take on a leadership role in school. Leaders foster and nurture pupils' talents and interests. For example, pupils who excel in subjects have the opportunity to attend centres of excellence across the multi-academy company (MAC).

The curriculum has been designed in meticulous detail. Leaders have thought carefully about what they want pupils to learn, from early years through to the end of key stage 2. Learning is broken down into well-sequenced steps. Leaders have also considered how to ensure that all pupils develop a rich vocabulary and use language well. This is built into the curriculum and is reinforced in classroom activities. For example, children in nursery learn important historical language related to time, such as 'long ago', 'old' and 'then and now', when learning about pirates. This language is then further developed in key stages 1 and 2.

Staff are highly successful at teaching pupils to read. A structured phonics scheme starts in nursery. Staff follow this daily throughout early years and key stage 1 for as long as pupils need it. When necessary, they also provide catch-up sessions. All staff have been trained in how to teach phonics so that targeted teaching can continue into key stage 2 if necessary. Once pupils have mastered phonics, staff introduce them to a wide range of books and do much to promote a love of reading. Pupils enjoy visiting the well-stocked school libraries and listening to stories. This helps pupils to develop a real love of reading. Pupils spoke confidently about their favourite books.

Leaders have ensured that the knowledge that pupils need to learn and remember is identified and sequenced in the curriculum. This means that teachers know exactly what they need to teach and when they need to teach it. It also means that they know what to check. As a result, assessment strategies are focused, purposeful and effective.

Pupils know the school's 'respect' rules and say, 'We treat one another as we would like to be treated.' Because pupils are motivated to learn, there is almost no disruption to learning.

Pupils with SEND are identified early and receive excellent support to access the full curriculum. This is because staff assess pupils and know their individual needs well. They use appropriate resources and skilful strategies to provide pupils with the help they need. As a result, pupils with SEND keep up and achieve exceptionally well. Leaders are adept at ensuring that they get quality advice and support for pupils with SEND.

The wider personal development curriculum is a strength in this school. School staff provide exceptional support for all pupils so that they stay physically and emotionally safe. Leaders' actions ensure that pupils know how to be good citizens. Pupils enjoy being school councillors, reading ambassadors, sports leaders and nurture leaders. They say that these roles 'set us up for jobs in later life.'

Well-informed, coordinated support from the MAC and school leaders guides staff to do their best. In turn, staff feel very well supported. The MAC brings a wealth of experience and skills together and provides excellent support for all leaders.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and directors have a deep understanding of the potential safeguarding risks that pupils in the school might face. Leaders carefully weave activities into the curriculum to develop pupils' awareness of, and resilience to, the potential dangers around them. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. School councillors are proactive to keep pupils safe on the roads outside school. For example, they have written to the local member of parliament and have been successful in obtaining a grant for road safety signs.

All staff are vigilant and ensure that pupils are kept safe. Leaders keep a close eye on all vulnerable pupils. Staff are well trained to identify, help to reduce and manage safeguarding risks for all pupils.

## Background

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

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in November 2016.

## 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.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	140297
<b>Local authority</b>	Stoke-on-Trent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10229073
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	469
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Albert Griffin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Victoria Brickley
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.saintgregorys.org.uk">www.saintgregorys.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	30 November 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.
- Leaders operate a breakfast club and an after-school club.
- The school is within the Archdiocese of Birmingham. Its most recent section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in July 2017. Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They restarted in September 2021. The school's next section 48 inspection will take place no later than 31 August 2025.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school 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.
- During the inspection, the inspector held meetings with the headteacher. He also held a meeting with the chair of governors and two directors of the MAC.

- The inspector held a meeting with the chief executive officer of the MAC and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the diocese. He also spoke to parents and carers at the end of the school day.
- The inspector viewed a range of safeguarding documents. He examined checks on safer recruitment and spoke with members of staff to check their safeguarding knowledge.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. He met with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with teachers and viewed examples of pupils' work. The inspector also spoke with pupils about their learning.
- The inspector observed children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 read to a trusted adult.
- The inspector spoke with members of staff about their workload and well-being.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school.
- The inspector considered the responses, including the free-text comments, to Ofsted Parent View. He also considered the responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

### **Inspection team**

Barry Yeadsley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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