

# St Gregory's Catholic High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111454
<b>Local authority</b>	Warrington
<b>Inspection number</b>	378308
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 November 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Neil MacKenzie

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	972
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Margaret Heelam
<b>Headteacher</b>	Stephen Clarke (Executive)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 January 2007
<b>School address</b>	Cromwell Avenue Westbrook Warrington WA5 1HG
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors saw 35 lessons and 35 different teachers. Meetings were held with two members of the governing body including the Chair, staff and groups of students. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including internal and external student progress data, school development planning and students' workbooks. They also scrutinised 656 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, 151 questionnaires returned by students and 104 completed by members of staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The quality of teaching and current rates of progress for all students.
- The curriculum and the extent to which it is suitably adapted to meet the needs of all students.
- Care, guidance and support systems and the extent to which they actively support all students to improve, including those whose circumstances make them most vulnerable.
- The effectiveness of the systems for analysing students' performance, planning and sustaining improvement.

## Information about the school

St Gregory's Catholic High School is an average-sized secondary school. The school became part of a hard federation with Cardinal Newman Catholic High School in 2009. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The majority of students are White British and few students are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than is usual. The school has a designated resourced provision which caters for up to 12 students who have autistic spectrum disorders. The school calls this provision the 'Iona Room'.

The school holds an extensive list of awards and commendations. The most recent include awards for high GCSE attainment, Stamp Out Stigma and the O2 Young People: Leading By Example award. The school is a national lead school for Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL). At the same time as this inspection, an inspection of the school's religious character was undertaken and will be reported separately.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate**  
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

## Main findings

This is an outstanding school. St Gregory's students are confident and eager to learn because the school systematically develops students' spiritual and emotional well-being. Care for each other is instinctive and there is a wealth of rich learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom. A typical comment made by parents and carers is how proud they are to say that their children attend this school and, 'It has defined who they are.' It is not surprising that attendance rates are high and students have attained high levels of examination success for many years. The school promotes equality of opportunity extremely well and ensures the rates of progress for all students, including those in the Iona Room, are outstanding. Students' behaviour is exemplary; they are courteous and respectful to all. They are happy in school, thoroughly enjoy learning, socialise well and feel very safe. Safeguarding systems are very effective. The school is a cohesive, tolerant and supportive community. Students' understanding of their own and wider communities is sophisticated and they make excellent contributions to other communities as well as their own. Students develop extremely well both socially and academically and, as a result, are prepared outstandingly well for their next stage of education or the world of work.

The quality of teaching is good overall and there are many examples of outstanding practice in both key stages. The best practice builds confidence in students and encourages them to reflect on the quality of their own work and help them develop their own strategies for improvement. Group discussions are used very well, ultimately developing independent learners. Overall, the quality of teaching is good rather than outstanding because not all teachers and departments adopt the best practice which exists in school for marking work and enabling students to understand how to assess how well they are doing. Sometimes the learning is over-directed which limits opportunities for independence. Improving the quality of teaching is a school priority. There is an excellent programme for the professional development of teachers which has ensured widespread improvements over some time. The school however, is not insular. It actively seeks excellent relationships and partnerships to support learning, care and personal development. This includes excellent engagement with parents and support for other schools through use of its specialisms such as SEAL.

The school does what it sets out to do: 'foster the fullest spiritual, academic and personal development of our pupils.' It achieves all of this through excellent

leadership and management at all levels including the governing body, setting high aspirations and showing the same high quality of guidance and support to its staff that is shown to the students. There is excellent capacity for sustained improvement. The school is reflective as an organisation and evaluates its own performance rigorously and accurately. Improvements have been very carefully managed over many years. Systems to support the school's further development are very well established and embedded to ensure this high quality of education is sustainable.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding by ensuring the existing best practice within the school is used by all departments and all teachers, paying particular attention to:
  - ensuring teacher's marking includes guidance on how students could improve, and to check that students have acted on this advice
  - enabling students to understand how they can assess how well they are doing in their own work, and encourage them to do so
  - skilfully using group dialogue to develop pupils' independence in learning.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

<b>1</b>
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Students join the school with broadly average attainment, and leave with high levels of success in examinations. In lessons, students work at a level which is generally well-above average and they make excellent progress in most subjects. Students' extremely positive attitudes to learning and their excellent behaviour significantly contribute to their outstanding learning and progress and levels of engagement are usually high. Achievement in mathematics and in English is particularly high. In addition, GCSE results in art, geography, history and Spanish are strong. Systems for tracking students' progress provide accurate and precise information and these indicate that current students are in line to at least reach the high standards achieved by their predecessors. Teachers also quickly identify potential underachievement of individual students, groups and of whole classes. They intervene very effectively to ensure any underperformance is eliminated. The last inspection reported on underachievement of the most able students. The school has responded to this very successfully and achievement for the most able is now equally as good as it is for all groups. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those in the Iona Room, are extremely well supported, and as a result, make excellent progress.

Students set very high expectations for their own behaviour. Corridors and stairways within the school are narrow. Yet even at the busiest of times, there is calm and orderly movement. Most students say they feel very safe in school and students show genuine care for each other. Incidents of bullying are minor and rare. When they do occur, students say they are dealt with effectively and rapidly. Students demonstrate high levels of emotional and physical health and most make healthy food choices. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Many students make valued contributions to an exceptionally wide range of communities. Many give up free time to help younger students improve their reading and mathematics; others help run sporting activities in the local community. Every

week there is a collection for a different charity. This year the school has raised £1200 in less than three months.

Students are extremely well prepared for future engagement with education or work. They demonstrate high levels of literacy and numeracy, they are articulate and have very well-developed personal and interpersonal skills. Students attend very well and are very punctual. The school creates many opportunities for students to understand the world of work including careers talks, mock interviews and enterprise days. Great care is taken in giving students advice and guidance about their futures.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	1
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	1
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Typically in the best lessons there is a variety of activities which include paired and group work. Students know what 'good' looks like, have high expectations and are encouraged to evaluate their own work. Assessment is used by the teachers extremely well to determine the academic and emotional needs of students and thus to plan for realistic challenge and focused support for those who need it. Where modern technologies are available, teachers and students use them to good effect. In an English lesson students were helped to more fully understand the poem 'Poppies' by watching a short video clip of 9/11. This developed heightened empathy and engagement. Teaching assistants work in harmony with the teacher without over-direction, and relationships between students and adults are excellent. Some of the best practice was seen in English, humanities, music and physical education. The school recognises, however, that occasionally, learning is over-directed and then students are not given sufficient opportunities to work independently or collaboratively or to reflect on their learning to assess how well they are doing. Marking is of variable quality. Some students say they do not know how well they are getting on in some subjects nor do they know how to improve.

Care, guidance and support systems are outstanding and make a significant contribution to the development and achievement of all students. This includes students who attend the Iona Room. Through rigorous structures, the school

<sup>1</sup>The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

systematically analyses the needs of students and plans support programmes that provide improvements which can be sustained. The school adopts highly innovative strategies in a variety of settings. For example, personalised programmes are delivered exceptionally well through the Iona Room and the Augustine Suite, building basic skills, self-esteem, confidence and literacy. In some circumstances the school will work with students and their families in their homes. There is exemplary provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities so barriers to their improvement are minimised and they make excellent progress. Great care is taken at times of transition; partnerships are extensive and wide-ranging. Staff are well trained, skilled and highly effective.

The school provides an excellent curriculum. For all students it is broad, balanced, relevant and provides rich experiences. There are many examples of where programmes are specifically tailored to the particular needs of individuals. For example, additional GCSEs are offered to the most able students, others receive additional support with basic skills. Cross-curricular initiatives are good and literacy is exceptionally well developed. The development of social and emotional aspects of learning is innovative and has a significant impact on promoting academic achievement and personal development. There is strong collaboration between departments, and partnerships with external groups enhance the provision by providing new experiences. There is an excellent range of enrichment opportunities and students participate well in all of these. For example, a music competition, 'battle of the bands' involves 100 students from across all year groups. The school regularly reviews its enrichment offer and seeks to provide activities if they feel there is a need. For example, they started the 'pink ladies' fitness group targeting girls who wanted to improve their fitness, but did not enjoy competitive sport.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

This school has a very caring ethos. Members of the governing body and senior leaders are principled and visionary. They set high standards and clear direction for all staff. They continuously monitor school performance and are able to quickly identify areas for development and ensure all students have equal chances to succeed. Leadership at all levels is inspirational and determined. The school has continued to improve since the last inspection when it was judged to be good. The school has a very well-organised and highly effective programme for continued professional development. Whole-school developments, like assessment, are rapidly improving the quality of teaching. Other adults, teaching assistants, for example, are well trained to meet the specific needs of their students. The governing body is experienced and shares the same passion as school leaders to constantly provide a high quality education for the students. It provides excellent support and challenge to the executive headteacher and ensures all statutory duties are met. Target-setting

is realistic but challenging and the impact can be seen in students' consistently outstanding achievement. The school meets statutory child protection requirements. The combination of tight safeguarding procedures and exceptional care means that this is a very safe school and safeguarding, as a whole, is outstanding. There is an excellent network of agencies that work in partnership to provide well-coordinated care. There are also very strong partnerships with schools and other providers to enhance students' learning in academic and personal development programmes. These educational links extend across the world to China. The school is a very cohesive community; values of tolerance and respect run through its core.

*These are the grades for the leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## Views of parents and carers

There was an almost overwhelming response to the Ofsted questionnaire; a very large majority of which showed great appreciation for the work of the school. A typical comment reflecting parents' and carers' views is, 'I don't think I could have made a better choice than St. Gregory's.' Most felt that teaching was good. The inspection team investigated concerns raised by the very small minority of those parents and carers who returned inspection questionnaires. A few felt that the school did not help their children to have a healthy lifestyle. We investigated this and while agreeing that students could have more information about the food they were offered, student's emotional and physical health were exceptional. A small number of parents and carers raised concerns about wanting to be better informed about their children's progress. We informed the school about this concern which is part of the school's review of its systems which are constantly carried out. Parents and carers agree overwhelmingly that the school provides a safe environment and that it is led and managed well.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Gregory's Catholic High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 656 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 972 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	231	35	385	59	34	5	2	0
The school keeps my child safe	289	44	353	54	10	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	251	38	357	54	39	6	3	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	251	38	363	55	33	5	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	254	39	374	57	16	2	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	207	32	383	58	53	8	2	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	159	24	418	64	60	9	2	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	250	38	355	54	25	4	2	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	231	35	384	59	24	4	2	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	246	38	353	54	39	6	6	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	162	25	419	64	37	6	9	1
The school is led and managed effectively	269	41	354	54	13	2	2	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	298	45	335	51	13	2	1	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



23 November 2011

Dear Students

### **Inspection of St Gregory's Catholic High School, Warrington, WA5 1HG**

We thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to talk with you about your work and to listen to your views. We judge that St Gregory's Catholic High School is an outstanding school. We were very impressed by the way you worked so well together and worked with adults. In fact, we think your behaviour is exemplary. As you can imagine, there are many things we like about your school and these are the highlights:

- the excellent progress you make during lessons, and your outstanding examination results
- the excellent care, guidance and support available to you and your excellent attendance records
- your exceptional spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which has been justly recognised with so many awards for the school
- the extensive range of opportunities you have to learn both in the classroom and out.

We recognise there is a lot of outstanding teaching in your school, and as an area for development we have asked your school to extend that excellent practice even more, paying particular attention to marking, supporting you to assess your own work and extending the use of group work. We believe these improvements will help you learn more independently.

The inspection team hope you are pleased with the things we have said about your school and we know you will proud to say you are part of St Gregory's High School.

Yours sincerely

Neil MacKenzie  
Lead inspector

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