

St Gregory's Catholic High School

Cromwell Avenue, Westbrook, Warrington, Cheshire, WA5 1HG

Inspection dates 3–4 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Achievement in science remains too low. In addition, students who are disabled or have special educational needs, those who are eligible for pupil premium or less able make inadequate progress overall.
- Too much teaching is weak and fails to meet students' learning needs leading to poor behaviour.
- Disruption to learning is not uncommon particularly in the lower sets and in science.
- Leaders and managers have an inaccurate view of standards in school. Thus poor performance has not been effectively addressed.
- There are no effective policies or procedures in place to address behaviour including bullying, safeguarding or inequalities.
- Governors have not effectively challenged senior leaders to raise standards nor have they ensured that statutory duties are met.
- Attendance is low for some groups of students.

The school has the following strengths

- The new executive headteacher has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- The new chaplain is inspirational and is doing some very positive work with local primary schools.
- Achievement in English and mathematics is strong.
- Exemplary teaching was observed in drama.
- The school library is well-stocked and popular, particularly among Key Stage 3 students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors took account of the 87 responses to the on-line Parent View survey and 65 responses to the staff survey.
- The inspection team observed 34 lessons taught by 34 teachers and they also made a series of short visits to lessons to observe behaviour. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders, and representatives of the local authority including the School Improvement Partner.
- Inspectors formally listened to approximately 70 students in meetings and many more around the school site. This included students chosen by inspectors, students who approached inspectors, and student leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wealth of other evidence provided by the school including records pertaining to teaching and learning, self-evaluation and reports written by the School Improvement Partner. Inspectors also took account of surveys of students' views, a sample of students' work, school improvement planning, evidence of students' current achievement, accident records, and policies relating to behaviour management, anti-bullying, child protection and equalities.

Inspection team

Sally Kenyon, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
John Townsley	Additional Inspector
Pauline Pitman	Additional Inspector
John Leigh	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with 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.

Information about this school

- St Gregory's Catholic High School is an average-sized, mixed Catholic secondary school. It is part of a hard federation with Cardinal Newman High School with a shared governing body and an executive headteacher across the two schools.
- The executive headteacher was appointed in April 2013 due to the retirement of the previous post-holder. A new Head of School was appointed in September 2013.
- A few students speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A much smaller than average proportion of the school's population are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is government funding set aside to help schools support children of armed forces families, students who are looked after by the local authority and students who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs supported at school action is almost twice the national average.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- Around 13 students are educated off-site or receive home tuition. Placements for alternative provision include: Grappenhall Hall, the Pupil Referral Unit, the Relationships Centre, Street League and Fullagers.
- The school has a 'Columba room' which operates as an internal exclusion unit.
- The school hosts a local authority provision for approximately 16 students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly raise achievement in science and for students who are eligible for the pupil premium, those who are less able, those who are educated off-site and those who are disabled or have special educational needs by:
 - insisting that all teaching is high quality and carefully planned to meet students' needs
 - making sure that the subjects and activities on offer are well organised and suitable for students' needs
 - ensuring that all books are marked and that marking promotes better progress
 - regularly listening to and acting upon students' views
 - meticulously tracking students' progress.
- Urgently improve behaviour and safety by:
 - improving the attendance of those who are persistently absent or whose attendance is low
 - ensuring that students have a good understanding of prejudice, discrimination and human rights so they know what kind of language is acceptable and what may cause offence to others.

- Establish effective leadership and management at all levels by:
 - ensuring that there are effective and timely policies and procedures in place for safeguarding and behaviour, including anti-bullying and child protection
 - gaining an accurate view of the day-to-day quality of teaching and giving teachers helpful and specific feedback to help them improve their practice
 - ensuring that robust arrangements for safeguarding are in place
 - using performance management to swiftly eradicate aspects of weak management across the school
 - ensuring that governors fulfil their statutory duties, regularly hold leaders to account and have an in-depth understanding of the school's finances.

An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

- Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Students enter the school with attainment slightly above the national average. In 2012, attainment fell sharply in English and science. While standards in English recovered in 2013, attainment in science remains too low.
- In approximately half of the lessons observed by inspectors students failed to make good progress. In a small minority of lessons they made inadequate progress. Achievement in science is weak due to consistently poor teaching.
- Students were observed making inadequate progress in science lessons during the inspection. School leaders and managers are acutely aware of the weaknesses in science which were highlighted very accurately by a review of the department carried out earlier this year. A number of parents have written letters of complaint to senior leaders regarding the quality of teaching and achievement in science. Although some action has been taken to address the quality of teaching within the department it has not been swift or rigorous enough.
- Target-setting, data and tracking are in their embryonic stages. The new systems put in place in September are too new to measure any impact. Targets for some groups of students, particularly those who are eligible for pupil premium and those who are more able are not challenging enough.
- Those students for whom the pupil premium provides support make inadequate progress overall due to weaknesses in teaching and the curriculum contributing to poor attendance at school. These students leave approximately one GCSE grade behind their peers in English and mathematics.
- The achievement of students who are disabled or have special educational needs is polarised. A small group of students make good progress in the Autistic Spectrum Disorder provision due to high quality planning. However, provision for those who are disabled or who have special educational needs around the school is weak because many teachers do not plan effectively to meet these students' learning needs.
- A few students who are educated through alternative provision were observed making good progress by inspectors but their achievement is not tracked over time. This is a key weakness particularly for those students who receive home tuition. There is no effective mechanism to identify their underachievement.
- Achievement in some subjects including English, mathematics, drama and music is strong. The Year 7 catch-up funding is used well to improve reading. Early entry has been used in mathematics to some good effect. Students speak with great pride about their latest performance 'Our house'.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching over time is inadequate because there are a number of subjects including science and physical education (PE) where provision is weak. Furthermore, the quality of teaching for those who are less able and those who are disabled or have special educational needs is far too variable and often substandard. This raises important questions about equality of opportunity for students; some are getting a better deal than others.
- Inspectors observed inadequate teaching in science, physical education, religious education and design and technology. Some of these lessons were suggested to inspectors by school leaders because they felt the teaching was particularly strong. This serves to re-enforce the fact that leaders and managers have an inaccurate view of the quality of teaching.
- Too much teaching is not adjusted well enough for those students who have specific learning needs or for whom the pupil premium provides support. Little support is given for literacy across a range of subjects and too often students are asked to copy notes from the board. This means that students who have low literacy levels cannot access their learning without help and consequently

make little or no progress.

- Teaching is often dull or too easy for some groups of students so they lose interest; they go through the motions, but are not fully engaged.
- In a physics lesson some very able students were unchallenged by the activities, so their attention wandered. Their books were barely marked and as a consequence, they did not have a good understanding of their current level of performance or what they needed to do to make better progress.
- Similarly, in a design and technology lesson students were asked to design a storage unit to fit in the era of the last 10 years. A key barrier to progress was that students did not have extensive knowledge of design over the last 10 years. Students worked in isolation from one another with little guidance of how their work would be assessed, the purpose of it or the teachers' expectations. Students were bored and disinterested because they could not see the purpose of their learning.
- Some books are unmarked and many are marked in a cursory fashion leaving students unable to ascertain how they can improve their progress. However, in some subjects, such as drama, high-quality written feedback is given to students. This allows students to make markedly better progress and achieve consistently strong results.
- Many opportunities to promote social, moral, spiritual and cultural education are missed. There are no coherent programmes to teach important issues through citizenship, personal, social, health education, or to give impartial advice about careers education and guidance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate

- A serious incident that occurred at the school since the previous education inspection is under investigation by the appropriate authorities.
- All of the students spoken to by inspectors say that they feel safe in school. They also said that homophobic language, swearing and disruption to lessons were not uncommon and would not always be addressed by teachers. This may be because the school's anti-bullying policy does not state what teachers, parents or students should do if they observe bullying or become a victim of it.
- Some students felt it was acceptable to use the word 'gay' in a derogatory way as long as it was not repeated because then it may amount to bullying or be offensive to some people.
- Students highlighted some clear inequalities in behaviour. They said that more-able students would have much less disruption to their learning than less-able students except in science where they felt that some teachers failed to manage behaviour effectively regardless of ability. Inspectors observed some inadequate behaviour in science.
- At lunchtimes, students were observed running very quickly on the yard without due regard for others. This resulted in at least two collisions on the second day of inspection. Scrutiny of the accident book shows that collisions at breaks and lunchtimes are not uncommon.
- Some students showed a distinct lack of respect for staff. Likewise staff were observed shouting at students. This is because there are no agreed expectations or parameters for behaviour management. School policies do not say where teachers should record incidents of poor behaviour or what the procedures are for referrals to internal exclusion.
- A group of students were asked why students misbehave and they replied 'because we can'. There are no effective systems to combat unacceptable behaviour.
- Fixed-term exclusions have increased. Although the rates of fixed-term exclusions are below the national average overall, they are over three times the national average for those students who are eligible for the pupil premium and disproportionately high for boys. School leaders have not identified these inequalities or taken effective action to remedy them.
- School records show a high number of incidents this year. Records from the Columba room show that there have been over 100 referrals over the past five weeks alone. Records prior to this are patchy. It is impossible to ascertain the full scale or nature of behaviour incidents across the school because even now, a number of referrals to this room are incompletely logged so the

reason for the referral is unknown. As yet, there is no analysis of data around behaviour so patterns of poor behaviour, repeated poor behaviour for individuals and groups of students are not identified and effectively dealt with.

- A survey of students initiated by school leaders this year highlights concerns over behaviour and bullying across Key Stage 3. It also highlights a very serious concern raised by one student. None of these concerns have been effectively followed up by senior leaders. According to school records there has been one incident of bullying and one racist comment this year. Inspectors found compelling evidence that instances of bullying were much more widespread but there is no effective procedure in place for students to report bullying so some bullying goes unreported.
- A very small minority of parents who responded to Parent View felt that the school did not deal well with bullying.
- Attendance is above average overall but low for students who are eligible for the pupil premium. This is a significant barrier to improving their achievement.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Standards of achievement, teaching and behaviour have fallen since the previous inspection. Staff say that since the appointment of the executive headteacher some essential systems have been put in place but these changes are very recent and there is little measurable impact. Responses to the staff survey show overwhelming support for the new leadership.
- Senior leaders say that the executive headteacher is allowing them to have open dialogue, scrutinise achievement data and try new initiatives. They welcome this opportunity and they are ambitious for the school. They now feel that they are able to challenge staff about poor performance but this development is very recent and there is no measurable impact.
- The executive headteacher commissioned a full review of science and called an extraordinary meeting of governors to address the continued underperformance. As a result, senior leaders have begun to tackle underperformance. However, the robustness of performance management is severely undermined by inaccurate assessments of the quality of teaching, and standards in science have not been effectively addressed.
- A consistent approach to setting performance management targets was recently introduced and many senior and middle leaders say they welcome being given access to vital published data about students' performance to help them see where students perform less well than others nationally. Senior leaders rightly recognise that poor staff performance has not been effectively tackled in recent years.
- The executive headteacher has introduced many necessary basic systems including registers in lessons, a centralised system on which staff can record incidents of poor behaviour and a weekly calendar to monitor standards. Systems for recording students' achievement are being centralised. However, the tracking of achievement for those students who are educated off-site or have special educational needs outside of the ASD unit is weak resulting in underperformance going unchecked.
- The leadership and management of teaching and learning are weak. Leaders and managers feel that most of the teaching in school is at least good. This view is inaccurate because senior leaders have not paid sufficient focus to the progress of all groups of students.
- An inspiring assembly was observed led by the school chaplain. However, many opportunities are missed to build a strong platform for social, moral, spiritual and cultural education.
- The leadership and management of behaviour are inadequate. Policies and procedures for managing behaviour, safety and inclusion are either out of date, inappropriate or ineffective. There is no strategic analysis of behaviour data and data are inaccurate. The single central record meets requirements.
- The local authority is rightly concerned about the quality of leadership and management in the school. It has appropriately challenged senior leaders about issues relating to the inclusion of students with different needs but it has not challenged robustly enough the continually poor standards in science. It is working with the school to investigate financial irregularities.

- A small minority of parents who responded to Parent View feel that the school is not well led or managed.
- There is little commonality between the processes and procedures of the two federated schools. This is a big opportunity missed to raise standards and to use pockets of strong expertise to best effect.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors do not have a secure understanding of school performance data. They have not effectively challenged senior leaders about key weaknesses such as the quality of teaching and its impact on the progress of students who are less able and those who are eligible for pupil premium funding. They have failed to tackle underperformance effectively.
 - They have not discharged their statutory duties to ensure that there are adequate policies and procedures in place for dealing with behaviour including bullying.
 - Governors do not know how much money the school has. They have been alerted to a very serious deficit.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	111454
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	433727

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	969
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Heelam
Headteacher	David Lewis Executive Headteacher/Mrs Rose Howard-Rigby Head of School
Date of previous school inspection	21 November 2011
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