

# St Gregory's Catholic High School

Cromwell Avenue, Westbrook, Warrington, Cheshire WA5 1HG

## Inspection dates

3–4 May 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good across the school.
- Work is not appropriately pitched at the right level for pupils in some subjects. There is a lack of challenge for the most able pupils.
- In 2016 at GCSE level, the progress made by pupils in English was significantly below national average and below average in mathematics.
- Although showing improvement in Years 7 and 8, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils currently in school is not consistently strong.
- Pupils' literacy skills are not developed across all areas of the curriculum.
- Some pupils are not encouraged to move on in their learning when they are ready to do so. When this happens, pupils become bored and the pace of learning slows.
- Middle leaders' action plans to target areas for improvement lack specific measurable outcomes. They do not provide a helpful tool to support rapid school improvement.
- Middle leaders are not fully effective in improving the quality of teaching and raising achievement in their areas of responsibility.
- The school's system for tracking pupils' progress does not provide enough detail about the standards being attained by pupils. In some subjects, teachers do not plan learning that maximises pupils' progress.

### The school has the following strengths

- Staff and parents are very supportive of the new headteacher. Since his appointment, improvements have been made to behaviour, attendance and procedures for checking the quality of teaching and learning.
- Governance is strong. Challenging questions ensure that senior leaders are held to account.
- Teaching is improving and is strong in science, modern foreign languages, religious education, art, music, drama and physical education (PE). In these subjects pupils make good progress.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and make good progress.
- Processes to keep pupils safe are strong. Pupils feel safe in school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- Pupils' attendance is just above the national average and improving overall and for different groups of pupils.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are polite, courteous and show respect for one another and for their teachers.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress across different subjects, including English and mathematics, by ensuring that:
  - work is appropriately challenging, particularly for the most able pupils
  - disadvantaged pupils achieve at least in line with other pupils nationally
  - teachers develop pupils' literacy skills in the different subjects
  - teachers create learning opportunities and resources that motivate pupils and prompt swifter progress.
- Further improve the effectiveness of leadership by:
  - improving middle leaders' action plans to be precise, sharp and focused on measurable success criteria
  - ensuring that middle leaders are effective in improving the quality of teaching and raising achievement in their subjects
  - ensuring that the school's tracking system provides more accurate and detailed information about pupils' standards to maximise the progress that pupils make.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Leaders want the best for the pupils. Until the appointment of the new headteacher, there had been limited success in ensuring that teaching across the school in different subjects was of good quality. Although this aspect of the school's work still requires improvement, the new headteacher has put in place stronger systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning, and improvements are starting to be seen.
- Middle leaders' action plans to tackle areas where improvement is needed are superficial and lack specific quantifiable outcomes. Consequently, it is too difficult to assess the effectiveness and impact of the actions.
- Senior leaders have implemented new systems for tracking the progress made by pupils. In some cases, particularly in key stage 3, they do not provide enough information about the standards being attained by current pupils. Where this is the case, the information is not always helpful in identifying the progress pupils are making or the next steps that pupils should take to improve their learning.
- Pupil premium funding is starting to be used more effectively to enhance the achievement and engagement of disadvantaged pupils. Funding is used for a range of aspects, including providing additional staffing, specific learning materials, practical support and financial contributions towards school trips and visits.
- There is a robust system of performance management for teachers. Objectives are linked to pupils' targets and are challenging. Information from performance management is used alongside identified areas in need of improvement to determine the training that teachers require to support school improvement.
- Staff morale is high. Staff are positive about the increased expectations placed upon them by the new headteacher, as well as the support that they receive. They talk about an 'increase in momentum', in terms of addressing weaknesses in the school, since September 2016.
- The headteacher has extended the number of partnerships to facilitate the sharing of good practice beyond the school, including with practitioners from outstanding schools. External moderation of Year 11 English and mathematics mock examination papers has taken place. This shows that there is consistent and accurate marking of GCSE papers by teachers in these subjects.
- Teachers take part in a wide range of opportunities to help them improve their teaching, including observing one another.
- Increasingly, middle leaders are taking part in internal monitoring reviews alongside senior leaders. This is helping them to develop their leadership skills. While some middle leaders have been very effective in securing high-quality teaching and raising the achievement of pupils in their subjects, this is not consistent across other subjects.
- Processes for tracking and targeting the attendance of pupils are effective. Attendance is just above the national average and increasing for all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils.

- Since September 2016, the curriculum has been reviewed so that it better meets the needs of all pupils. It is broad and balanced. Recent changes have meant that there are more opportunities for pupils to embark on vocational courses and unsuccessful courses have been removed.
- Careers advice for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is effective and independent. However, this is not developed well enough in Years 7 to 9.
- An extensive range of extra-curricular activities is provided. These include clubs, trips and visits, which enhance pupils' broader experiences and their social and cultural understanding.
- Pupils' spiritual and moral development is promoted well. They are provided with opportunities to learn about different faiths and cultures, develop a good understanding of diversity and take part in work for charities. Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders use effective strategies for gathering the views of pupils and ensuring that they are active participants in the running of their school. Pupils are regularly asked for their opinions and ideas. There is a school council which helps to bring about improvements.
- Funding is used well to provide good support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers and teaching assistants have received training aimed at helping them to be fully effective in supporting pupils to make good progress in their learning.
- Parents and pupils are very positive about the progress that the school has made since September 2016 under the leadership of the current headteacher. Pupils say that behaviour has improved and that 'teachers are very supportive'. Parents refer to a 'warm and caring' environment in which 'children appear to be enjoying their education again'. Leaders are working hard to engage parents and regularly solicit parents' views.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governance is a strength of the school. In the past three years, there has been success in recruiting governors with a wide range of appropriate and complementary skills.
- Governors know the school well and offer significant support and challenge to the leadership of the school. The minutes of the governing body meetings indicate that governors ask challenging questions of school leaders.
- Governors are fully involved in the life of the school through their involvement in departmental reviews and regular visits to the school.
- Governors know how the pupil premium funding is being spent. Its impact on outcomes for pupils has not yet been fully realised.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Safeguarding is given a high priority in the school and systems for staff recruitment, documenting incidents and safeguarding training are secure, robust and rigorous. As a result, staff, pupils and their parents endorse that St Gregory's provides a safe environment.
- Staff are trained appropriately and are knowledgeable about the latest guidance about keeping children safe in education. Training has included how to protect pupils from

the dangers of extremism and e-safety. All know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil.

- The school works closely with parents to ensure the safety of pupils who may be particularly vulnerable.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Requires improvement**

- Although inspectors noted some areas of strong practice, the quality of teaching over time is not consistently good across the school.
- Work is not pitched appropriately for pupils in some classes and subjects. There is a lack of challenge, particularly for the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils. Some tasks set for this group of pupils are pitched far below their ability level.
- In some lessons and in some pupils' books, inspectors saw missed opportunities to develop pupils' literacy skills. Teachers did not always highlight key words that pupils had not spelled correctly. Opportunities for pupils to develop and practise speaking skills were sometimes missed.
- Pupils read regularly, but school leaders do not always ensure that reading books are sufficiently challenging for individual pupils.
- Over time, the quality of teaching in English has been strong. Outcomes dipped in 2016 because marks for the controlled assessment were lowered following moderation by the examiner.
- In mathematics, there has been a period of instability in staffing, which has affected pupils' outcomes. Staffing in this subject is now more stable and teaching is improving.
- Inspectors saw evidence of teaching assistants supporting learning well.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and show interest and enthusiasm for their subject areas. Where teaching is most effective, this knowledge is used effectively to inspire and motivate pupils.
- There are positive relationships between teachers and pupils and clearly established classroom routines. Pupils are generally keen to learn.
- Homework is set regularly in most subjects. When it is set, it helps pupils to develop good study habits.
- Pupils benefit from strong teaching in art, modern foreign languages, science, drama, music and PE. In these subjects, pupils' levels of enjoyment in their learning are high and they make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress. During conversations with pupils, they told inspectors that they particularly enjoy learning when they are offered the opportunity to discuss their ideas and opinions, work in groups and learn by 'finding things out for themselves'.

### Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

#### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.

- Pupils feel safe in school and this is endorsed by almost all parents who completed the online survey, Parent View, and by all staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire. Pupils value the high visibility of staff around the school.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. They demonstrate clarity of understanding about sexual exploitation, e-safety, social networking, radicalisation and extremism.
- Staff cater well for pupils' physical and emotional well-being. Most parents are extremely positive and appreciative about the care that their children receive while at school.
- Communications with the parents of pupils judged to be at risk are very effective and help to secure the welfare of these pupils.
- Staff are well trained and vigilant in identifying pupils experiencing difficulties. School staff always act swiftly to ensure that pupils receive the help that they need.
- Pupils are taught tolerance and respect for all. They are given opportunities for reflection during assemblies. This enhances pupils' sense of spirituality well and reinforces the Catholic ethos of the school.
- Pupils learn about faiths other than their own during religious education lessons and have opportunities to learn about a range of issues, including citizenship, democracy and elections in their personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education studies. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are well prepared for the next stage of their employment, training or education. They are provided with independent and effective careers education, advice and guidance. As a result of this guidance, pupils make appropriate choices about the next steps in their education.
- There are few instances of bullying in the school, confirmed by the school's anti-bullying records and the comments of staff and pupils. Pupils told inspectors that on the rare occasions when bullying does happen it is dealt with effectively by staff. The harmful effects of bullying are covered in detail by the school's curriculum and pupils produce anti-bullying posters and notices, which are displayed across all areas of the school and frequently updated.
- Pupils who are educated in alternative provision are very well cared for. Teachers contact and visit providers regularly to ensure pupils' welfare and safety.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those who are educated in the special autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) resource unit, are very well cared for. They develop confidence and good social skills and they enjoy coming to school.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school has a clear behaviour policy, which sets high standards for pupils' conduct. Almost all pupils behave well. The poor behaviour of a minority is well managed and does not have a negative impact on others.
- Pupils' attitudes to school are mainly very positive. They arrive in school on time. Pupils are well prepared for their lessons and wear their uniform with pride.

- There is a high staff presence around the school, which helps pupils to make good behaviour choices and ensures that pupils' movements around the school are orderly. Behaviour during the inspection was good.
- Pupils are courteous and friendly to visitors, holding doors open and offering to show guests where to go. Pupils care about each other and respect the different communities that are represented in the school.
- Pupils are given opportunities to take on responsibilities and to develop leadership skills. They are clear about the link between rights and responsibilities. Pupils appreciate the need to work hard if they are to succeed.
- There have been no permanent exclusions for the past three years. The number of fixed-term exclusions has fallen over the past two years, for all groups of pupils.
- Pupils' attendance is just above the national average and improving. Leaders have put effective procedures in place to support good attendance. The number of pupils who are regularly absent has reduced this year, for all groups of pupils.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- The progress made by pupils at GCSE level in 2016 in English was significantly below that made by pupils with similar starting points nationally. In mathematics, progress was below average and particularly weak for low prior-attaining pupils.
- Over time, the outcomes of pupils in English and in mathematics have been broadly average. The progress of pupils currently in English and in mathematics is showing improvement and assessment information indicates that outcomes of pupils in Year 11 at GCSE level this year are likely to be above average. Inspectors noted, however, that progress in these subjects is not yet consistently strong for all pupils in the school.
- In some subjects, including in English and mathematics, and across year groups, some pupils, in particular the most able, are not challenged and therefore they do not make as much progress as they should.
- In 2016, in English and mathematics, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils from their starting points was significantly below other pupils nationally. In humanities (geography, history and religious education), the progress of this group of pupils matched that of others nationally. There continues to be some variability in the progress of this group of pupils across different subject areas and year groups but leaders have started to track, monitor and target support more effectively.
- Pupils who arrive at the school with weak numeracy skills are effectively supported and their numeracy skills quickly improve. Support for pupils whose literacy skills are weak on entry to the school is less effective in helping them to catch up.
- The progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities currently in the school is good because of the strong support that they receive. This includes those pupils educated in the special ASD resource unit.
- The rate of progress made by pupils in modern foreign languages in 2016 was significantly above the national average.
- Over time, pupils have made good progress and reached high standards in science, modern foreign languages, religious education, music, art and drama.

- The small number of pupils for whom English is a second language are very well supported and they make progress in line with their peers.
- Pupils who are educated in off-site alternative provision are very well catered for and make good progress on the courses that they study.



## School details

Unique reference number	111454
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	10032168

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	919
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alan Bell
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Mr Edward McGlinchey
Telephone number	01925 574888
Website	<a href="http://www.stgregoryshigh.com">www.stgregoryshigh.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:clerical@stgregoryshigh.com">clerical@stgregoryshigh.com</a>
Date of previous inspection	10–11 December 2015

## Information about this school

- This is an average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is just above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported through the pupil premium funding is below average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British origin. About 12% of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- A small number of pupils are educated in alternative provision, including at New Horizons.

- The school has a specially resourced unit for 16 ASD children on site. Provision is due to be reviewed by the local authority on 24 May 2017. The unit provides a safe and secure environment for some of the school's most vulnerable pupils.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited classrooms across a wide range of subjects in both key stages. Six lesson observations, on the first day of the inspection, were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- During visits to lessons, inspectors spoke with pupils and looked at their work to find out more about how well they were learning. Inspectors listened to pupils read, including two Year 7 and two Year 8 pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. Discussions were held with pupils in all key stages.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject leaders and members of the governing body. A telephone conversation was held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school more broadly and looked at a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, policies, minutes of governing body meetings, and the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation document.
- Inspectors considered 89 responses to Ofsted's online parental questionnaire, Parent View, and 53 responses to the questionnaire for staff.

## Inspection team

Helen Gaunt, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Philip Wood	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Sibson	Ofsted Inspector
John Leigh	Ofsted Inspector

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