



St Gregory the Great VA Catholic Secondary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 133644
LEA Oxfordshire LEA
Inspection number 282324
Inspection dates 8 February 2006 to 9 February 2006
Reporting inspector Janet Mercer HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Cricket Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Cowley
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Oxford OX4 3DR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01865 749933
Number on roll	942	Fax number	01865 717314
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Rev Martin Flatman
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Ms Kate O'Keefe

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team of 2 of Her Majesty's Inspectors and 2 Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Gregory the Great is a medium sized Catholic secondary school in its third year, having been established in 2003 following the re-organisation of Oxford schools from a 3 tier to a 2 tier system. Students come from a wide range of primary schools across the city. A high proportion of students come from some of the most socially deprived areas in the city. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is higher than average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and those with English as an additional language is higher than average. At the time of inspection, the school was operating on two sites prior to moving into a new building on one site in autumn 2006.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Gregory the Great provides a satisfactory standard of education overall. However, there are strengths and weaknesses in provision. Standards are satisfactory and most pupils make the progress expected. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 make good progress. The school liaises effectively with other agencies to provide good care, guidance and support for pupils. The recent establishment of a faculty to overcome barriers to learning demonstrates the school's commitment to social and educational inclusion. Behaviour is improving and is satisfactory overall. Productive partnerships with other schools and the local college provide a good and varied curriculum for all age groups. However, there are weaknesses in some aspects of teaching, in particular in mathematics and in the effectiveness of planning and assessment to meet all pupils' needs. The school's self evaluation is honest and accurate and inspectors confirmed most of the school's own judgements. Managers have accurately identified areas of poor performance, and an appropriate range of strategies is being put in place to bring about the necessary improvements. Monitoring procedures are still quite new and yet to be implemented fully across all areas, but in some subjects, for example science and information and communication technology, there are early signs of improvement. Pupils' achievements improved in 2005 and the school demonstrates the capacity to improve further. Governors are committed to the success of the school and have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They have worked closely with the headteacher and managers to develop the work of the school through a difficult period of transition and considerable change. Governors and managers are working with the local authority to manage the current budget deficit and on stabilising staffing and management costs. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that the sixth form is satisfactory. The school accepts students with a wide range of abilities into the sixth form and standards and progress are satisfactory. Pass rates have risen on AS and level 2 vocational courses in 2005. These are now in line with national averages for AS and A level courses and above average for level 2 vocational programmes. Partnership with other schools and the further education college, through the sixth form consortium, provides a good choice of courses at level 3 and a good range of level 2 vocational courses is available. Care, guidance and support are good, and students value the help they get in making choices for study and in progressing to higher education. The school acknowledges that careers education and guidance need to be further developed through the tutorial programme, and extended to cover opportunities for progression to employment. A high proportion of students gained higher education places in 2005.

What the school should do to improve further

* Increase the proportion of good or better teaching by improving teachers' planning and assessment to meet different needs of all learners* Improve pupils' attendance

and punctuality * Ensure consistent setting and marking of homework * Improve the leadership, management and quality of teaching in mathematics * Implement quality assurance and monitoring procedures consistently across the school

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievements and standards are satisfactory overall, but better for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 and the sixth form, than in Year 10 and 11. Pupils start school with lower than average attainment and make good progress in all core subjects by the end of Year 9. Results in national tests show significant improvement in English in 2005. The proportion of pupils achieving 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE improved in 2005, but was still well below the national average. Pupils average point scores increased slightly but were also below average. However, most pupils make satisfactory progress overall and many make good progress in English. In 2005, girls with prior attainment below level 4 performed less well than expected, particularly in mathematics and, to a lesser extent, in science. This contributed to the lower than average pass rates in mathematics. The school has identified these areas of concern and is taking action to raise the achievements of girls in these subjects. Senior managers are closely monitoring pupils' performance in Years 9 and 11 and many subjects provide revision and booster sessions to enable pupils to reach their targets. In 2005, 85% of pupils in Year 11 progressed to further education, training or employment. Standards in the sixth form are satisfactory. In 2005, pass rates in AS subjects improved significantly and are now in line with national averages. Pass rates on level 2 vocational courses also improved, with 95% of students gaining their qualifications. The school's analysis of students' results on level 3 courses shows that most make the progress expected.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is satisfactory overall. Relationships between students and staff are usually positive and behaviour is satisfactory. Both are strongest at the Key Stage 3 site. Most students come to school ready to learn and are cooperative and polite. However, few demonstrate a strong commitment to learning. Many students are passive and dependent learners and, in lessons, attitudes are often casual. Occasionally, a minority of pupils behave badly. The number of fixed term exclusions is too high but it has significantly reduced during the past year and there are good systems to support students in school. Communications with parents and robust daily monitoring has improved pupils' attendance but the rate is still below average. Poor punctuality at the start of the day and to lessons affects the progress pupils make in lessons. The staff have worked hard to respond to the needs of students and ensure their well-being. As a result, students' and parents' perceptions of the school have improved and are positive overall. Students understand the reasons why they should adopt healthy lifestyles and, although some do not eat healthily at lunchtime, a high proportion chooses to study sport in Years 10 and 11. Many students contribute to the community and demonstrate good concern

for their peers and safety. They volunteer for the role of prefect and peer mentor and help keep the site clear of litter. They take part in fundraising and sporting and musical events and publish a newspaper. Students help to write school policies. Increasing numbers undertake work related learning and all members of the sixth form take part in a business enterprise project. Although other opportunities to prepare for economic well-being are underdeveloped, the school sensibly plans to improve aspects of basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, including teaching in the sixth form. However, during the inspection the quality of teaching observed ranged between outstanding and unsatisfactory and was strongest in Years 7, 8 and 9. Senior managers make accurate judgements when observing lessons and know that some learning is not good enough. Inspectors observed good teaching in art, English, science and humanities, and most of the weaker teaching observed was in mathematics. In the most successful lessons, the management of pupils is good with supportive relationships between adults and pupils. Good subject knowledge and careful planning of learning outcomes underpin such lessons. Questioning is targeted, content is relevant and interesting, and pupils are encouraged to think for themselves; progress is rapid. In an art lesson, for example, pupils enjoyed their learning, readily contributing their ideas and evaluating their work accurately. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed in some lessons, but practice is inconsistent. Where teaching is less successful some pupils make insufficient progress. Slow pace, planning which fails to address the needs of all pupils, long explanations and too little questioning of pupils' understanding mean that some pupils become passive listeners, who ask few questions and make slow progress. A few pupils do not enjoy learning and are unwilling to respond to instructions or to apply themselves sensibly to their work. At its best, assessment supports pupils' progress with comments that help them to improve their work. However, the setting of homework and the quality of marking is too variable across the school; it is often cursory and gives pupils little guidance on how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good, varied curriculum that meets all statutory requirements and the needs of all pupils, including those who have learning difficulties and disabilities. Productive links with the local college enable a substantial number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 to take part in vocational courses and all Year 10 pupils undertake work experience. Curriculum provision for sixth form students is good. They benefit from a broad range of courses both in school and through the sixth form consortium. These include subjects designed to prepare students for further study or employment when they leave school. Pupils enjoy and support the good range of

sports and music activities and after-school clubs. Participation by pupils of all ages in these is good. Many of the trips, including those provided by the history and modern foreign language departments, designed to develop and support learning in these subjects, are regularly oversubscribed. The school recognises that there is currently an inconsistent approach within the curriculum to the development of literacy and numeracy skills. However the booster and revision classes provided by many subject areas are well attended, enabling pupils to improve specific weaker areas in different subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school is a caring community and the recent decision to form a faculty expressly charged with 'overcoming barriers to learning' demonstrates its commitment to each individual. Students know that staff will help them if they have a problem and appreciate the opportunities to get individual help via the tutorial system. Those with additional difficulties are given good support to manage in school. The personal and social education programme enables all students to make informed choices. A recently published and helpful student welfare booklet informs parents and students about what the school will do to keep students safe. It shows how the school can help them overcome difficulties and explains how to access support. Some teachers give students good guidance on how their work might be improved and some set helpful targets for individuals and groups. However, the use of this strategy is relatively new and underdeveloped. Guidance for students who are choosing subjects for further study and future careers is good; personal advisers are well deployed and local expertise is used effectively. Arrangements for supporting the most vulnerable students are sensitive, robust and regularly reviewed. Assessment of risk informs staff decision making. Child protection is taken very seriously and liaison with outside agencies is good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school judges that leadership and management are satisfactory and the inspectors agree. Senior managers clearly understand the school's strengths and areas for improvement and the school is making good use of the framework for self-evaluation. Governors are committed and they have a clear understanding of the school context, areas that have improved and the weaknesses that remain. The school has had to manage an unsettling period of transition, consolidating school reorganisation, managing a split site operation and preparing a move in the next academic year to purpose-built accommodation. Although this has affected the timing of the actions taken to tackle weaknesses, the headteacher has initiated a range of changes that are shaping the educational direction of the school effectively. Areas that need further development have been appropriately identified. Whilst the school improvement plan provides clear guidance on relevant issues for raising standards, some areas need more rigorous and clearly defined success criteria to help determine the next stage in

development. There are inconsistencies within the overall middle management of the school, particularly in the procedures for monitoring and evaluation. More rigorous reviews of curriculum areas and greater accountability of the teachers who manage them are beginning to be established. There are examples of good practice but not all members of staff with management responsibilities ensure that the sharing of good practice and regular monitoring of teaching and learning take place. Within the school, there is a strong commitment to inclusion and the care and concern for all pupils is high priority. Parents and pupils are increasingly involved in surveys and their views valued. There is a strong will to improve performance and the progress made by all pupils.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	4	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

My colleagues and I enjoyed visiting your school on 8 and 9 of February. Thank you for making us welcome and for talking to us, both in some of your lessons and in other groups. Some of your parents or carers responded to a confidential questionnaire and we also took their views and concerns into account when making our judgements. We encourage you to read the report as it will let you know in detail what your school does well, and how you can help your school to improve.

St Gregory the Great provides an acceptable standard of education and good care guidance and support. Pupils make good progress in Years 7, 8 and 9 and the results achieved in national tests are in line with those found elsewhere. Most pupils make the progress expected in Years 10 and 11, but all pupils need to work hard to improve GCSE results and to achieve as much as you can. Examination results for sixth form students are improving and are similar to those found in other schools. Your school provides a good range of courses and other activities, including opportunities for vocational study and a good range of activities and clubs outside school hours. Many of you told us how you enjoyed taking part in these. The school provides a good range of care and support for all pupils, and helps you make informed choices about courses for study at the end of Years 9, 11 and 13.

We have made a few recommendations to help your school improve and you also have an important part to play in this. You need to make sure that you attend school regularly and that you are on time, at the start of the school day and to your lessons, and that you behave well in class. Teachers need to ensure that their planning for teaching and assessment meets the needs and interests of different pupils and their abilities and that homework is set and marked regularly. The school needs to improve the leadership, management and quality of teaching in mathematics, to raise standards at Key Stage 4. Managers need to monitor closely the performance of different subject areas to make sure you are all able to achieve the best results you can.