

Inspection of St Gregory's Catholic Primary School

Albert Road, Bollington, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK10 5HS

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 February 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St Gregory's Catholic Primary School have a poor quality of education. Leaders' and teachers' expectations of what pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), should achieve are low.

Pupils do not receive a suitable education that prepares them for future success in the next year group or in their secondary school. Children in early years do not learn to read and count well enough. Older pupils struggle to recall the important knowledge that they have been taught because leaders have not planned an effective curriculum.

Most pupils enjoy coming to school. They are keen to share their ideas and opinions. However, some pupils talk over each other and their teachers. This behaviour is a distraction for others, especially children in early years and pupils in key stage 1.

Pupils learn to play musical instruments. They participate in different sports and visit local places of interest. Yet other aspects of pupils' personal development, such as their understanding of British values, are not consistently secure.

Pupils do not know enough about the potential safeguarding risks that they may face in their everyday lives. They are not taught how to keep themselves safe. However, they do trust adults in the school. They are willing to share their worries with adults in the hope that they will help.

Despite pupils feeling that staff would deal with incidents of bullying effectively, there is no agreed approach to tackling harmful behaviour in school. This means that pupils' confidence in staff is not borne out in reality.

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

Since the previous inspection, governors and senior leaders have failed to stem the decline in the quality of education that pupils receive. Staff, leaders and governors have been too quick to make excuses for the school's shortcomings. They have not taken the urgent action needed to give pupils, including children in early years, a high-quality education in a safe environment. The new interim executive headteacher is working with colleagues from the local authority to begin to address these considerable weaknesses. However, it is far too early to see the impact of this external support on pupils' achievement.

The curriculum is weak. Too little thought has been given to what pupils need to learn and when this content should be taught. Teachers, including those in early years, are left to their own devices, with little more than vague topic headings to determine what they should teach. With the exception of English and mathematics, leaders have not ensured that teachers have had sufficient training to build up pupils' knowledge of different subjects. This means that over time, pupils' achievement is poor across the curriculum.

Teachers do not routinely check whether pupils remember what they have been taught. Inspectors found that pupils were able to recall the activities that they had completed, but they struggled to recall any of the essential knowledge that they should have learned. This is not as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, but due to the marked weaknesses in how the curriculum is delivered.

Children in early years do not get off to a good start in learning to read. Leaders have brought in a new programme to teach phonics. However, teaching staff have not had the training and support that they need to deliver it well.

The support provided for pupils who are struggling to learn to read, including pupils with SEND, does not help them to catch up quickly with their peers. Older pupils enjoy the books that they study in their English lessons. However, leaders have not thought about the choice of books for pupils to read independently. Neither have leaders thought enough about how they promote a love of reading in pupils across the school.

Leaders' and staff's expectations of pupils' behaviour are not high enough. Leaders have not ensured that there is a consistent approach to managing pupils' behaviour. Staff do not ensure that they teach children in early years to take turns, to share and to listen to each other. This means that as they move through the school, a small minority of pupils exhibit poor behaviour and make unkind remarks to their classmates. This disrupts the learning of others and, for some, makes school an unpleasant place to be.

Leaders and teachers accurately identify pupils who may have SEND. They seek external specialist advice and help. However, pupils with SEND do not get the help and support that they need with their learning. Staff are not trained sufficiently well to use the information that they receive about pupils with SEND to inform how they adapt the delivery of lessons. This means that some pupils with SEND struggle to take part in lessons. Like other pupils in the school, pupils with SEND do not achieve well.

Pupils have access to a range of extra-curricular activities. They learn about tolerance and respect for other people. However, leaders' provision for pupils' personal development is not as well thought out as it should be. While pupils know about the potential risks they may face when playing games online, they are less aware of other risks, such as the sharing of nude images and county lines.

Governors have not carried out their statutory duties. They have not acted in the best interests of pupils. Despite being aware of the significant weaknesses in the school, they have allowed these to continue unchecked.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders' approach to the safeguarding of pupils is lax. Governors and leaders have not ensured that they, as well as staff, keep up to date with their safeguarding training. Consequently, leaders and staff are not sufficiently alert to the possible safety risks that pupils may face in their everyday lives.

Staff are not knowledgeable about their responsibilities to safeguard and protect pupils. Added to this, concerns about individual pupils' welfare are not routinely reported and recorded in line with the school's policy. There are some gaps in safeguarding records, which means that pupils and their families have not had the help and support that they need.

While pupils, parents and carers and staff share the view that pupils are safe, inspectors found stark evidence to the contrary.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils, including children in early years, are ineffective. This puts pupils at risk of harm. Leaders must establish a strong culture of safeguarding in the school and ensure that there are robust safeguarding procedures in place to protect pupils.
- Governors have not fulfilled their statutory duties. Governors and leaders have failed to stem the decline in how well the school educates pupils. Consequently, the quality of education that pupils receive is poor, pupils' personal development is not planned as effectively as it should be, and leaders do not manage pupils' behaviour effectively enough. Governors should ensure that they understand and carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively and that they challenge leaders to tackle the many weaknesses facing this school.
- Leaders have not determined what pupils need to learn and when this should be taught. This is also true in early years. This means that teachers are not clear enough about the knowledge that they should teach. As a result, pupils and children underachieve considerably. Leaders need to establish the essential knowledge that pupils and children in early years must learn. This will ensure that pupils and children are taught the important knowledge that they need to achieve well in all curriculum areas.
- Teaching staff, including in early years, have not had the training and support that they need to make sure that their own subject knowledge is secure. This affects how well they deliver subject content across the curriculum. As a result, teachers do not successfully plan appropriate activities that help pupils learn new subject content. They do not adapt the delivery of the curriculum sufficiently well for pupils with SEND. Leaders should make sure that teaching staff have the expertise needed to plan and deliver a meaningful curriculum that helps pupils, including those with SEND, to achieve well.
- Teachers do not use assessment systems appropriately. They do not check what pupils know and remember of their learning. As a result, teachers do not know

whether pupils, including children in early years, have learned and remembered important subject knowledge. Leaders should ensure that teachers have the expertise to assess pupils' work accurately so that they can address misconceptions and help pupils to remember knowledge in the long term.

- Leaders do not have effective systems in place to help those pupils who are behind in reading to catch up. Neither have leaders ensured that teachers are fully trained to deliver the phonics programme. This means that some pupils underachieve in reading. Leaders should ensure that all staff are equipped to deliver the phonics programme. They should ensure that appropriate strategies are in place to help pupils who are behind in reading to catch up quickly with their peers.
- Leaders' expectations for how well pupils behave are lower than they should be. This includes leaders' expectations of children's behaviour in early years. Leaders do not ensure that staff have a consistent approach to managing behaviour, including incidents of bullying. While most pupils behave well, a few pupils show a lack of respect for their peers and the adults who work in the school. Leaders and teachers should ensure that pupils and children behave well and show consideration, good manners and courtesy towards everyone.

The school may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	111327
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10199968
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	73
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paul Leff
Headteacher	Jacqueline Walker
Website	www.stgregorys.cheshire.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	13 September 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is currently being led by an interim executive headteacher. The substantive headteacher left on 21 January 2022.
- A new chair of governors has been elected to the governing body since the previous inspection.
- The school is a voluntary-aided Catholic school. its most recent section 48 inspection took place in November 2017.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. They deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 44(1) of 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.

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- During the inspection, inspectors held meetings with the interim executive headteacher and teaching staff. Inspectors spoke with representatives of the local authority and the diocese. Inspectors also met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted’s pupil and staff surveys.
- Inspectors met with the leaders with responsibility for safeguarding. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation in relation to safeguarding. They spoke with staff, parents and pupils about safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed pupils’ behaviour during lessons and at playtimes. They spoke with pupils about bullying, behaviour and leaders’ expectations of pupils’ behaviour.
- As part of this inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, history and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, considered the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, met with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and reviewed samples of pupils’ work. Inspectors also listened to pupils read.

Inspection team

Pippa Jackson-Maitland, lead inspector Her Majesty’s Inspector

Lindy Griffiths Ofsted Inspector

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