

St Gregory's Catholic Primary School

Furness Road, Westfield, Workington, Cumbria CA14 3PD

Inspection dates

1–2 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The appointment of the current executive headteacher was a turning point for this school. Together with the current head of school, she has created a culture where both staff and pupils strive to achieve the best they can.
- Staff morale is high and all relish the new challenges that they are being set. The executive headteacher is improving the quality of leadership across the school. While middle leaders are managing their roles well, some are just beginning to take responsibility for initiating improvement.
- Governors have also improved the quality of their work. Good governance is contributing to this rapidly improving school.
- In the early years and throughout the school, pupils make good progress from their below-typical starting points.
- The care that pupils receive is of the highest quality. Staff invest much time and skill in the promotion of pupils' physical and mental wellbeing. Leaders ensure that all pupils experience a rich and diverse range of activities and opportunities that promote their personal development exceptionally well.
- Leaders have systematically and skilfully improved teaching. High-quality planning, as a result of very good collaboration between staff, has resulted in consistently strong teaching.
- Leaders and teachers are now beginning to turn their attention to improving subjects other than English and mathematics. While standards in these other subjects are acceptable, they are not as strong as they are in English and mathematics.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding in lessons and around the school. They take their learning very seriously and they work enthusiastically.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in the good attendance rates of most pupils. The school provides effective support to those families who struggle to get their children to school.
- Parents and carers, older pupils and staff all testify to the considerable improvement in this school over the past few years.
- Parents, pupils and staff agree that pupils are well cared for and safe. Staff assiduously act on any concerns. Pupils are taught about potential risks and how to keep themselves safe from harm.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the skills and confidence of middle leaders, enabling them to evaluate accurately the impact of their work and to drive further improvements in their areas of responsibility.
- Further develop the curriculum so that pupils' strong achievement in English and mathematics is consistently reflected in other subjects.
- Continue to provide effective support and help to those families who struggle to get their children to school so that the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent reduces further.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- This is a school where pupils are safe, happy, caring and industrious. Pupils are very proud of their school. Senior leaders have created a culture where pupils and staff strive to meet the high expectations that are now set for them. Staff have flourished because of the excellent guidance and support that they receive to improve their practice.
- The executive headteacher has systematically developed the leadership skills of all leaders within the school. All leaders now know their responsibilities and they understand what is expected of them. Middle leaders have good organisational and management skills. They are beginning to evaluate the impact of their work, based on the difference being made to pupils' learning and personal development. However, they are at the early stages in using this information to steer further improvements.
- A feature that has made a significant contribution to the improvement at St Gregory's is its collaborative work with its partner school, Our Lady and St Patrick's, in Maryport. Teachers have been learning from each other through observations of lessons and discussions about pupils' assessment information. Leaders benefit from this professional relationship, which is used well to support improvements across the school. Pupils also gain from this partnership, for example, visiting each other's schools and working with new people. Educational visits are often undertaken collaboratively.
- The contributions made by all staff to improving the school are carefully evaluated and achievements are celebrated. The support given to staff helps them improve quickly. The range of good-quality training staff receive is extensive. As a result of high-quality training and professional collaboration, teaching has improved quickly.
- The curriculum for reading and writing has been developed well. Teachers frequently review the curriculum for English and modify it when they identify a need. For example, one teacher noticed an unusually high proportion of boys in her class, so added books and activities that would be of more interest to them. Leaders seek to supplement the English curriculum through educational visits, such as The Wordsworth Trust. The mathematics curriculum has been recently reviewed. There is now a clear, whole-school strategy in place to teach mathematics. This is having a clearly positive effect on pupils currently in the school.
- Less consideration has been given to subjects other than English and mathematics. Consequently, although pupils typically make good progress in these subjects, they do not achieve as well as they do in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The leadership of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is particularly strong. The needs of these pupils are promptly and accurately identified. Very good guidance to staff on how to support pupils with SEND helps both teachers and teaching assistants to provide very effective support.
- Teaching assistants fulfil a wide range of responsibilities across the school and make a significant contribution to the excellent welfare standards and good progress of all pupils.
- About half of the pupils attending St Gregory's are disadvantaged and the school receives additional funding for them. Leaders ensure that staff develop a detailed understanding of the barriers to learning which eligible pupils face. Staff are then able

to provide very specific support and guidance to these pupils. The additional funding which the school receives is spent well, contributing to pupils' improved outcomes, their care and their personal development.

- Additional funds that the school receives through the physical education (PE) and sport premium goes to broadening the range of activities in which pupils can participate. All pupils from Year 2 take part in swimming lessons. Inter-school sports activities are popular. Many older pupils develop their leadership skills through taking responsibility for organising sporting activities and encouraging younger pupils to become physically active.
- Leaders ensure that all pupils are given high-quality opportunities to promote their personal development and leadership skills. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is particularly strong, and this leads to pupils showing an understanding of, and respect for, people from different backgrounds. Examples of the wealth of provision include: the very popular residential; learning about other faiths, celebration of different feast days; pupils experiencing democracy and developing their understanding of British society; and learning about other European and African cultures.
- Over time, the local authority has given very good support to the school because they were concerned about the progress that pupils made by the end of Year 6. The local authority and the diocese have worked well together to broker the engagement of the executive headteacher, who was charged with improving the school quickly. The local authority has since recognised the improvements being made in the school and has, with confidence, reduced the level of direct support.
- Staff believe that working in partnership with parents is critical to helping pupils to learn and develop very well. The school's hard work to improve their engagement with parents has been very effective. Parents said that they are encouraged to visit the school and take part in activities. They said that they feel welcomed by the school and that they can seek advice from the school staff. They are particularly complimentary about the role of the executive headteacher in the school's improvement and the ease with which they can talk to class teachers.

Governance of the school

- Around the time of the last inspection governors realised that they needed to improve the quality of governance. They engaged a national leader in school governance to review the impact of their work. Governors have responded very positively to the guidance they were given.
- The governing body is much clearer about the role they need to play. They are much more capable of challenging senior leaders about the impact of their work. Governors continue to be very passionate and effective supporters of the school. Consequently, governors are making a positive contribution to the school's improvement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Despite a very heavy caseload, the designated safeguarding leader ensures that all pupils who might need protection are very well cared for and looked after.

- Safety and safeguarding are promoted through teaching pupils how to identify and deal with potential dangers. These include the risks when using social media, when pupils are out and about in their communities and when at home. Pupils feel very safe in school and say that they know that staff will look after them.
- The school reviews the effectiveness of safeguarding policies and procedures frequently. For instance, since the last inspection site security has been improved, particularly around the early years setting.
- Staff, including new and temporary staff, are well trained to respond to concerns they may have about a pupil. They know how to respond should a pupil disclose information to them.
- The school's procedures to recruit only suitable persons to new posts are rigorous.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers understand how their work contributes to pupils' progress as they move through the school. For example, all teachers know the part they play in the systematic teaching of mathematics across the school. Similarly, teachers in key stage 1 fully understand how their teaching of phonics will support pupils' abilities to read and write confidently and competently by the end of Year 6. All teachers know and accept their responsibility for ensuring that pupils leave St Gregory's well prepared for secondary school.
- Staff have consistent, high expectations of pupils in different classes. From the youngest to the oldest pupils, they all work enthusiastically and purposefully. Teachers choose topics and activities that pupils find interesting and so almost all pupils are fully engaged in their learning.
- Teachers plan sequences of lessons very effectively. They understand pupils' prior learning. They have a detailed knowledge of the English and mathematics curriculum. Teachers ensure that pupils of all abilities learn well. Teaching assistants are capable and confident, so all pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, progress well.
- Teachers inspire pupils through developing their curiosity and celebrating everyone's success. The excitement engendered in younger pupils by a visiting tyrannosaurus rex, a full-sized puppet, has lingered for a long time. Teachers used this opportunity to give pupils experiences that stimulate their imaginations and support their creative writing. Obviously, a visiting dinosaur cannot go unnoticed by other pupils, and key stage 2 teachers ensured that their pupils benefited from the experience as well.
- Teachers help pupils to persevere when they struggle to grasp difficult concepts. Teachers ensure that pupils get plenty of opportunities to practise their new learning, often in practical, problem-solving situations. Through good questioning teachers help pupils to think deeply about what they are learning, and to develop their speaking and listening skills.
- There has been less of an emphasis on developing teaching and assessment for subjects other than English and mathematics. Pupils are given many opportunities to develop their writing skills and subject knowledge in these subjects. However, there is much less of an emphasis on teaching subject-specific skills and, apart from in English

and mathematics, the practical application of what pupils have learned. Subject leaders are now beginning to coordinate development in these subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Staff know the strengths and needs of every pupil in detail. They are therefore able to spot quickly when a pupil is not his or her usual self and can take subtle action to start the process of helping them.
- All staff believe that for pupils to learn well, they must firstly feel secure and be in a positive frame of mind. Consequently, they deploy an extensive range of highly effective strategies that promote pupils' mental and physical health. Time is taken to develop pupils' spirituality and they are given opportunities to reflect. Staff create opportunities for pupils to talk about their opinions, experiences and feelings. Pupils are also encouraged to run and play and just have fun.
- There is considerable expertise within the staff team to help those pupils who need more structured support to cope the complex challenges that they can occasionally experience. The school provides a wide range of therapies that help pupils' well-being and self-esteem. The school has strong links with external agencies that offer help and guidance for those pupils who need professional support beyond the scope of the school.
- Pupils' moral and principled approach to life means that they will intervene if they think a fellow pupil is not happy.
- The school takes a very structured approach to promoting pupils' personal development. Again, the detailed knowledge which staff have of pupils enables them to give every pupil well-targeted support. Some support is in large groups and some is individual. While a small group may be writing a letter persuading local businesses to pay more attention to the environment, others are engaged in activities such as gardening.
- Bullying is very rare in this school and incidents that do occur are minor because pupils will not tolerate bullying. Pupils are confident that adults will help to address these incidents so that they do not become more serious or more frequent. Pupils say that they do not hear derogatory or bad language in school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour around school is impeccable. They are extremely caring and very respectful of others. They are confident and polite.
- In class pupils are very keen to do well. They work studiously on their own as well as participating very responsibly in group work. Almost all show enthusiasm for learning. They rightly take great pride in their school and are proud of their own work.

- Most pupils are in school, on time, every day. They make sure that they return promptly to their classrooms at the end of breaktimes and lunchtimes so that lessons get off to a timely start.
- The school works well with those families who struggle to get their children to school. The school liaises with other professionals to make sure that these families get the help and support that they need. The school follows up assiduously on any absences. As a result, most of the pupils with a history of poor school attendance attend school more regularly now. Moreover, this has made a positive difference to their progress and attainment. Nonetheless, while the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is reducing, it remains high.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- As a result of improvements to the quality of teaching, current pupils are making better progress across the curriculum than in the past. Moreover, teachers are identifying gaps in pupils' learning, particularly for older pupils. Teachers are using this information well to plan lessons that help pupils catch up quickly.
- Pupils have a strong foundation in reading and writing. The teaching of phonics is very effective so that pupils quickly secure early reading skills. In Year 1 in 2018, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected standard in the national phonics screening check was average. By the time pupils leave Year 2, the weakest readers catch up quickly to their peers. Good teaching, including the use of well-selected texts, helps pupils continue to develop as strong readers across key stage 2. By the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading is in line with the national average.
- Pupils enjoy reading. They read confidently and with expression. Teachers choose class texts which engage and enthuse pupils. Pupils enjoy talking about their favourite authors and genres of books.
- In writing, current pupils achieve well across the school. From a broad range of starting points, good teaching and interesting activities help weaker writers catch up with their classmates. Pupils' work testifies to their good progress. Over time, pupils learn to write more accurately and at length. The proportion of Year 6 pupils attaining at least the expected standard in writing in 2018 was above average. Teachers develop pupils' writing skills well across the curriculum.
- The much-improved teaching of mathematics, across the whole school, is resulting in improving rates of progress. Current pupils are making better progress in mathematics than pupils in previous years.
- Teachers develop pupils' skills well in English and mathematics but less deeply in other subjects.
- Teachers' and teaching assistants' acute awareness of the extent and very differing needs of their pupils helps them to provide high-quality, tailored support. Consequently, while most pupils with SEND make similar progress to others in the school, a significant proportion make strong progress.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language receive effective support which

helps them develop fluency in their spoken and written language.

- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND achieve well across the school. Leaders' judicious use of additional funding for these pupils ensures that they make good progress across the curriculum.
- Pupils are well prepared for their future lives because of their strong personal development, highly positive attitudes to learning and good achievement.

Early years provision

Good

- Leaders have managed the very recent move of the early years provision into new buildings very effectively. Despite the disruption and potential distractions, children's learning has not been interrupted.
- A large proportion of children join Nursery with aspects of their development below those typical for their age. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is a key member of the early years team, ensuring that any child who needs additional support or therapy is identified as early as possible. Similarly, staff understand the needs of disadvantaged children and ensure that they learn as well as others. Skilled staff use highly effective systems of assessment to establish the needs of every child rapidly. This ensures that children get off to a flying start.
- Staff provide children with activities and opportunities that match their needs and help children to learn quickly. Staff frequently assess how well children are developing and adapt their teaching to promote better progress.
- Staff skilfully ask children questions about their learning. This helps children to increase their vocabulary, their ability to express themselves, and their capacity to think more deeply about their activities. Staff develop children's language and social skills, with great success, for instance through using role-play activities. Teaching helps children to become more confident and develops their self-esteem.
- Strong leadership has ensured that all aspects of teaching and learning have been good over a long period of time. Staff receive good quality and extensive training. Very effective teamwork between adults is evident and teaching assistants make a major contribution to children's excellent welfare, good learning and development.
- Staff have been well trained to systematically and effectively develop children's understanding of phonics. Children begin to learn the basics of reading and writing quickly. Early years staff have been involved in the recent school initiatives to improve the teaching of mathematics. This is strengthening children's grasp of numbers and how to use them.
- Standards of welfare and safeguarding are as strong in the early years as they are in other parts of the school. Children are happy and safe. From their first introductions to the early years, children are taught how to share, play, respect others and how to be helpful to others.
- Parents say that they receive good information about how well their children are learning and that they feel involved in their children's education. Parents feel comfortable about asking staff for advice and guidance.
- Children are very well prepared for their move into key stage 1. They have very good

learning habits, behave well and are keen to learn. They make good progress over their time in early years.

School details

Unique reference number	112339
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10057924

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kevin Greenhow
Executive headteacher	Jacqueline Hampson
Telephone number	01900 606 050
Website	www.stgregorys.cumbria.sch.uk
Email address	admin@stgregorys.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 November 2016

Information about this school

- The school was inspected in June 2016 under section 48. The section 48 inspection evaluated the quality of religious education.
- Since the previous inspection in November 2016, three permanent teachers have left and been replaced.
- The executive headteacher is also the executive headteacher of another local diocesan school, Our Lady and St Patrick's. These schools now work closely together. The executive headteacher is a national leader in education (NLE). Two teachers are specialist leaders in education (SLE).
- Since the start of the school year, a number of pupils who have been granted refugee status in the United Kingdom have joined the school. These pupils are new to speaking English.
- Since the last inspection, the governing body has undertaken a review of the effectiveness of governance.

- The governing body runs a breakfast and an after-school club.
- The school is currently undergoing a major refurbishment programme.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, the head of school and other leaders and managers. The lead inspector met with four members of the governing body, one of whom holds the position of chair. The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority and held a telephone meeting with a representative of the diocese.
- Inspectors talked to pupils during their break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors met with all teachers and some teaching assistants.
- School documents were scrutinised, including safeguarding checks, information about pupils' achievement and records of checks on the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors visited classrooms mainly with the executive headteacher, to speak with pupils, look at their work and observe their learning.
- The headteacher and other senior leaders were party to many of the inspection activities.
- Inspectors received four comments from parents sent by text messages. They also spoke to parents during a pre-planned session where parents were working in school with their children. There were insufficient responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, for inspectors to consider. However, inspectors did consider the 47 parental responses made to the school's own survey.
- Inspectors also considered the view of the 19 staff who completed Ofsted's online survey and the 22 pupils' responses to their survey.

Inspection team

Neil Mackenzie, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Stephen Rigby

Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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