

Inspection of an outstanding school: St Gregory's Catholic Primary

Park Road, Bearwood, Smethwick, West Midlands B67 5HX

Inspection dates:

16 and 17 July 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The principal of this school is Kevin Brown. This school is part of Emmaus Catholic Multi Academy Company (MAC), which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Suzanne Horan, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Joanna Griffin.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a Catholic school with ambition, where pupils are genuinely valued and cared for. Staff and governors want all pupils to achieve well in a school where 'loving and learning' is central. Since the last inspection, there has been significant turbulence in staffing and leadership. The new principal, along with the trust, have brought about stability and the school is in a place to move forward positively.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils. In turn, pupils work hard and typically achieve well. They take care of how they present their work; this contributes to the quality of work they produce. They listen and engage well in lessons because teachers make content interesting. Classrooms are places of industry and effort. From the early years to Year 6, there is a palpable buzz about learning.

Pupils' behaviour in classrooms is positive. There is rarely disruption to learning. Pupils are confident and independent, being active partners in their learning. They are willing to offer their opinions and are respectful of the views of others. They become mature learners committed to their education and ready for their next stage of education.

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

The school has put in place an ambitious curriculum which builds over time. They have thought carefully about what key knowledge pupils will need and the order in which it will

be taught. This also includes the ways teachers adapt the curriculum so that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities can access it. There is ongoing refinement of the curriculum as staff carefully consider the needs of pupils. In history, for example, careful thought has been given to the facts pupils must learn, the key vocabulary they must use and the concepts they will need mastery over to be good historians. Teachers make meaningful links between history and other subjects, including geography. This helps pupils develop and retain a greater depth of understanding in history.

In mathematics, pupils develop a secure knowledge of number. They have regular opportunities to apply their knowledge through reasoning to solve problems. Teachers ensure that pupils regularly revisit past learning so they gain confidence and a secure understanding.

Teaching pupils to read is a priority. The school has ensured that adults who teach phonics are well trained to do so. Children in the early years have daily phonics sessions that they engage in with enthusiasm. By the end of Year 2, most pupils are fluent readers. Those who need additional help get the support they need to catch up. In later years, pupils develop a love of reading and read often. They take advantage of the well-stocked school library that is run by the junior librarians.

The early years is a vibrant and engaging environment for young minds. Whether it is teaching phonics, providing meaningful, explorative activities or utilising the varied outside environment, staff offer children an exciting learning experience. Children take full advantage of this and develop into happy, confident learners who are ready for the challenges of Year 1.

There is a wide range of clubs and visits on offer and pupils enjoy taking part in these. For instance, Year 6 relished their five-day residential at an adventure centre. In their personal, social and health education lessons, pupils learn about staying safe online, healthy relationships and finance. Pupils contribute to the life of the school in a range of ways. They join the school council, become Mini Vinnies' and prayer leaders. Although the offer is varied, it lacks a level of strategy and structure to enable as many pupils as possible to benefit from these experiences.

Incidents of poor behaviour are rare. Staff and pupils say behaviour is typically good. Pupils appreciate the way that staff speak to them about their behaviour if it falls short of expectations. Pupils enjoy being active at playtimes. However, there are some behaviours in the playground they would like to improve, including disagreements about football.

The staffing changes in the school in recent years have left many parents and carers feeling dissatisfied with the school. This includes communication about who will be teaching their children and what their children will be learning. The school and trust fully acknowledge this and have made improving parental engagement a priority.

Leaders at all levels have been successful in galvanising staff morale and providing support and training. Staff are proud to work here and feel valued. This is a school well placed to improve rapidly.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has been through a period of instability since the last inspection. Communication with parents has not been maintained effectively. This means that some parents are dissatisfied because they do not receive enough information about the changes in the school or what their children are learning. The school needs to communicate effectively with parents to provide assurance and reassurance about their children's education.
- The planned activities for pupils' wider development are broad, meaningful and purposeful, but lack an overarching strategy. This means that the experience of pupils varies more than it ought. The school should refine the offer so that there is equity in provision and that all pupils benefit from high-quality opportunities to enhance their wider development.
- Pupils appreciate the new behaviour approach but still say there are times when the behaviour of some pupils in the playground falls below the standards expected. The school should refine and embed the new approach and make expectations and successes explicit to pupils and their parents.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in March 2019.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	141924
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	10344050
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	269
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Joanna Griffin
CEO of the trust	Suzanne Horan
Principal	Kevin Brown
Website	www.st-gregorys.sandwell.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	5 and 6 March 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The principal joined the school in April 2024.
- The school joined The Emmaus Catholic MAC in February 2021. The trust runs 10 academies.
- As a Catholic faith school, the school is subject to inspections under section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The school was inspected in July 2018 and judged to be outstanding. The next inspection will be within eight years of the last section 48 inspection.
- The school provides before- and after-school care.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken this into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the principal and other leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector met with the chief executive officer and the vice-chair of the board of trustees.
- The inspector met with members of the local board of governors.
- The inspector spoke with a representative of the diocese and a school improvement partner.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes. He visited the lunch hall and the outside area at lunchtime.
- The inspector spoke formally with groups of pupils, as well as talking to pupils in lessons and around school.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text responses. The inspector also took account of responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including the school's website.
- The inspector spoke to parents and carers at the school gate.

Inspection team

Gareth Morgan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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