

Inspection of St Gerard's Catholic Primary and Nursery School

Lugsdale Road, Widnes, Cheshire WA8 6DD

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 November 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils get a good deal at this school. They thrive socially, educationally and emotionally. Their delight in attending St Gerard's is reflected in the way that pupils arrive at school at the start of the day with happy, smiling faces. Staff know the pupils well and value them as individuals.

Leaders, staff and governors are united in their ambition for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to succeed. Pupils strive to live up to these high expectations and achieve well across most subjects. Pupils feel safe and they are safe. They know that if they have any worries or concerns, adults are there to support them.

Staff expect pupils to behave well, and they do. They are polite and well mannered, and make visitors to the school feel welcome. Quite simply, they are a credit to the school and their families. Bullying is rare, but when it does happen, adults deal with it effectively. Pupils play happily together in the playground and are kind and caring towards each other. Pupils contribute to decision-making within the school through their roles as members of the school parliament and fire safety champions.

Classrooms are fun places for pupils to learn. There are many high-quality displays around the school that bring the curriculum to life.

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

The headteacher and assistant headteacher work well as a team. Together, they have a crystal-clear understanding of the strengths of the school and of the priorities for development. They, along with the rest of the staff and governors, take the view that there is no limit to what pupils at this school can achieve.

Curriculum plans for many subjects have been successfully implemented and are embedded across the school. The planning of these subjects gives teachers clear guidance about the knowledge and skills that should be taught, and in what order, from early years to Year 6. However, for some subjects, the journey to full implementation continues. As a result, some pupils may not achieve as well in these subjects as they should.

Staff undergo regular training to keep their subject knowledge fresh and up to date. Subject leaders are given ample time to make sure that the curriculum in their area of responsibility is being delivered as they intended.

Highly skilled staff in early years give children an excellent start to their education. The curriculum in early years is exceptionally well planned and sequenced. As soon as children start at school, they are totally immersed in stories, rhymes and poems. Every opportunity is taken to develop children's language and mathematical skills. Children display high levels of concentration and are confident and independent learners.

The teaching of reading is given a high profile. Staff are experts in the teaching of phonics. However, for some groups of pupils in key stage 1, distractions in the environment can, at times, hinder their concentration on phonics learning. Younger pupils show a love of reading. They read books that are precisely matched to the sounds that they know. Pupils who are falling behind are given extra support to help them to catch up with their peers. Older pupils talked enthusiastically about their favourite authors and the types of books that they like to read. Pupils are keen to learn, and poor behaviour rarely disrupts learning.

Some pupils can recall prior learning. For example, pupils in key stage 2 recalled key knowledge from their studies about the Great Fire of London. Others talked enthusiastically about the American sculptor Augusta Savage, whom they are currently learning about in history. Some pupils are beginning to make connections across subjects. For example, pupils talked about using their knowledge of number to identify coordinates on a map to enable them to locate El Salvador.

Pupils with SEND have their needs identified quickly. Through the use of additional support and resources, the curriculum is adapted so that these pupils can access the same learning as their friends.

Pupils talked fondly about a varied range of out-of-school clubs and trips that they enjoyed prior to the start of the pandemic. Some of these clubs and trips have now restarted. Great care is taken to ensure that pupils' physical and mental health is well promoted. Pupils raise money for charitable causes and celebrate faiths that are different from their own. Pupils talk confidently about difference, for example in relation to same-sex families.

Parents and carers are effusive in their praise of the school. Staff encourage parents to take an active part in their children's learning. However, staff are keen to do more to give parents an even greater understanding of how their children learn to read. This will allow parents to become even more involved in their children's learning.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate the care taken by senior leaders to ensure that they have a good work-life balance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding the welfare of pupils is given a high priority at this school. Leaders ensure that staff know how to keep pupils safe. Staff know how to recognise pupils who may be at risk from harm or who need additional support. They have a secure understanding of the procedures to follow should they be concerned about a pupil's welfare. Staff ensure that vulnerable families receive the support they need in a timely manner.

Pupils have a secure understanding of how to stay safe when online. They are aware of the dangers of disclosing personal information or passwords. Pupils also understand that behaviours such as peer-on-peer abuse are unacceptable.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some subjects in the curriculum are not yet securely implemented in key stages 1 and 2. This means that pupils are not achieving as well in these subjects as they do in others. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum plans for these subjects are implemented to the same high standard as other subjects in the curriculum.
- When some pupils are learning phonics, they are, at times, distracted by what is going on around them. Leaders must ensure that when phonics is taught, pupils are able to concentrate fully on their learning. Doing so will enable pupils to apply themselves so that they can achieve as well as possible.
- Leaders have identified that even more could be done to give parents a deeper understanding of how their children learn to read. Leaders need to consider ways of working even more closely with parents to increase their knowledge further of how their children learn to read. This will enable parents to support their children's reading skills further.

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	111391
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10200829
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	233
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	David Chambers
Headteacher	Karl Landrum
Website	www.st-gerards.halton.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 September 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, a new chair of the governing body has been appointed.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school's last section 48 took place in June 2015.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, assistant headteacher and members of staff.
- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body and with a representative from the Archdiocese of Liverpool.

- The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding. Inspectors also spoke to staff about safeguarding and about their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors observed children’s behaviour as they moved around the school, in class, in the dining hall and in the outdoor play areas.
- Inspectors talked with parents as they brought their children to school. They also considered the responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and to the staff online questionnaire.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives into early reading, mathematics, art and design, and computing. Inspectors spoke with subject leaders and teachers. They visited lessons and looked at examples of pupils’ work. The lead inspector observed pupils reading with a familiar adult. Inspectors looked closely at other areas of the curriculum.

Inspection team

Sheila Iwaskow, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

James Marsh

Ofsted Inspector

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