

Inspection of St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School

Well Lane, Alsager, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST7 2PG

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 June 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 12 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since March 2012.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive in this happy, nurturing school. Children in the early years, along with any pupils who are new to school, are given a warm welcome. They settle into school life quickly. Relationships between adults and pupils are exceptionally strong.

Pupils' behaviour is remarkable. They model the school's values each day, for example by being kind to one another. Pupils focus well during lessons. They show high levels of respect for each other and staff. Pupils leave at the end of Year 6 as responsible individuals who are considerate of other people.

The school is extremely ambitious for pupils. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), rise to the challenges that the school sets for them, academically and socially. They achieve highly across the curriculum.

Pupils benefit from an array of experiences, such as museum and theatre visits and a wide choice of after-school clubs. They make a tangible difference to school life through the many opportunities that they have to develop their leadership skills. For example, older pupils flourish in their roles as 'buddies' and 'bronze ambassadors'.

Pupils who act as school councillors take their roles seriously. They encourage others to think about how they can make the school an even better place. Other pupils take on the role of safeguarding ambassadors. They help to support any of their peers who are upset or lonely.

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

The school, with the support of the governing body, ensures that pupils not only achieve highly, but that their time at school is filled with rich and memorable experiences. The school's ambition to ensure that pupils have the best possible start to their education is realised in full in many aspects of its work. However, this diligence is sometimes not matched equally well in terms of some of its work to protect pupils' welfare.

The school has developed an aspirational curriculum. From the start of the early years to Year 6, the curriculum flows well. The school has ensured that teachers know what to teach and when to deliver subject content.

Pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as their peers. The school accurately identifies pupils' additional needs. It ensures that pupils with SEND receive the support and wider opportunities that they need to achieve well. These pupils are fully prepared for the next stage of their education.

Teachers have strong subject expertise. They use this to deliver the curriculum consistently well. Teachers design learning activities that enthuse and inspire pupils. This ensures that pupils are motivated to learn. Teachers check pupils' knowledge carefully during lessons. They skilfully identify and address any misconceptions that

would otherwise hinder pupils' learning. Pupils build an extensive range of knowledge across each curriculum subject. They achieve very well. Pupils have a firm foundation on which to build when they move on to secondary school.

The school cultivates pupils' love of reading very well. Pupils read from an extensive range of high-quality texts written by different authors. They hold articulate, thoughtful conversations about their favourite books. Older pupils relish their roles as reading buddies, where they help younger pupils learn to read.

From the outset, skilled staff help children in the Reception Year to make a swift start in learning to read. They make sure that children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 who are not keeping up with the intended pace of the phonics programme receive timely support. The school ensures that pupils read from books that contain the sounds that they already know. This approach helps pupils to learn to read with confidence and to develop into fluent and accurate readers.

The school fosters a warm and positive climate for learning. In lessons and around the school building, pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils place a high value on their education. They do not want to miss out on any learning. Their rates of attendance are high. If pupils' absence levels start to increase, the school works closely with parents and carers to reduce the barriers that may limit pupils' attendance.

The school fosters an impressively strong community spirit. This is embedded through regular assemblies that celebrate the school's values and support pupils' sense of collective endeavour. The school gives pupils the opportunity to learn about each other's differences, cultural beliefs and challenges. This gives pupils a wonderful understanding of those around them. Pupils take on a range of responsibilities within the school. For example, older pupils took part in an enterprise project to raise funds and spread awareness for local charitable causes. Some pupils organised a recent art event which raised money to help people in warzones.

Staff feel valued and respected by the school and the governing body. They appreciate the support for their professional development through regular training, which helps them to fulfil their roles well. Staff are immensely proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

While pupils are safe at this school, inspectors found some shortcomings in its safeguarding arrangements. The school does not have a thorough enough approach to recording all aspects of safeguarding, and this could make it difficult for the school to maintain an oversight of its effectiveness in keeping pupils safe. It also makes it difficult for the school and the governing body to evaluate the effectiveness of their safeguarding practices.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not ensured that some administrative aspects of safeguarding are conducted as well as they should be. While this does not place pupils at risk of immediate harm, it does hinder the school in making sure that pupils receive all of the support that they may need. The school, including the governing body, should ensure that it maintains suitable systems that enable it to maintain a clear overview of safeguarding.

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

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| Unique reference number | 111339 |
| Local authority | Cheshire East |
| Inspection number | 10294271 |
| 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 | 204 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Michael Mitchell |
| Headteacher | Edward Byrne |
| Website | www.stgabriels.cheshire.sch.uk |
| Dates of previous inspection | 26 and 27 March 2012, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- This Roman Catholic school is part of the Diocese of Shrewsbury. The last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in November 2023. The school's next section 48 inspection is due before November 2028.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school does not use any alternative provision for pupils.

Information about this inspection

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

- 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 inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The lead inspector held meetings with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team. She met with leaders who are responsible for attendance, behaviour and pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and music. They met with subject leaders and with teachers. Inspectors visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work and spoke with pupils about their learning.
- The lead inspector observed pupils from Years 1 to 3 read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors considered the curriculum in other subjects. They met with leaders, spoke with pupils and reviewed some pupils' work in these subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: 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 lead inspector spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. She also spoke with representatives of the local authority and of the diocese.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They also took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors looked at a range of policies and documentation relating to pupils' welfare and education. They observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school.
- Inspectors met with parents at the start of the school day. They took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. They also took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.

Inspection team

Helen Friend, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Elizabeth Hulse

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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