

Mount Carmel Roman Catholic High School

Wordsworth Road, Accrington, Lancashire, BB5 0LU

Inspection dates

27–28 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school because

- The majority of students make good progress from their starting points, enjoy their learning and apply their skills well in varied contexts.
- The proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE qualifications at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has steadily risen and is in line with the national average.
- The progress of students who join the school with below average reading skills accelerates because of well-judged and sensitive support.
- Teaching and learning are good across the school. Teachers enthuse students and have consistently high expectations.
- Students' good behaviour contributes to their achievement. Attendance has improved significantly and exclusions are rare. Students feel safe from bullying and contribute to the smooth running of the school.
- The headteacher is a principled and effective leader who has quickly earned the respect of the school community. He is supported by a skilled team of leaders and managers who ensure that rigour and ambition permeate all aspects of the school's work.
- The governing body provides valuable support and challenge, working in partnership with leaders to manage performance effectively in order to improve teaching and achievement and ensure that the school continues to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In some lessons, teachers do not support the development of students' literacy skills well enough.
- Sometimes students' learning decelerates when teachers talk for too long and opportunities for students' independent learning are lost.
- In a few lessons, teachers do not adapt their lessons effectively at the point of delivery in response to the pace of students' learning.
- Some marking does not clearly identify what students need to do next to improve their work and some students do not routinely check and act upon their teachers' feedback.
- Although teaching is monitored regularly, not all middle leaders identify the impact of teaching on students' learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 37 lessons, of which eight were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition they made other short visits to lessons. They also listened to several students reading.
- Four groups of students met with inspectors. Meetings were also held with school staff, including senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and one other governor, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 62 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). They also considered parents' responses to school surveys and analysed 53 questionnaires completed by school staff.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including the school's improvement plan, monitoring records, self-evaluation, and data on students' current progress. Records relating to behaviour and attendance were reviewed, together with the school's arrangements for safeguarding. Performance management arrangements were considered.

Inspection team

Shirley Gornall, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Peter McKay	Additional inspector
Cathy Morgan	Additional inspector
Bernard Robinson	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is higher than found nationally. Around one third of students is from minority ethnic groups, of which the largest is Pakistani. A small but increasing number of students is at an early stage of learning English.
- Around one third of students, a proportion much higher than found nationally, is identified as disabled or with special educational needs and is supported through school action. Their needs relate mainly to moderate learning difficulties and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is similar to that found nationally.
- A small number of students in Years 10 and 11 is educated off site, principally at Accrington and Rossendale College.
- The school's performance is above the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expected for students' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher took up post in September 2011. Several teachers, including middle leaders, are relatively new to the school.
- The school has specialist status for science.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is good or outstanding by:
 - equipping all teachers to support the development of students' literacy skills
 - ensuring that teachers adjust their lessons according to students' responses to their teaching
 - ensuring that teachers' advice to students on how to improve their work is clear, and that students routinely act upon their teachers' comments
 - providing further opportunities for students to learn independently.
- Sharpen the evaluation of teaching to focus on its impact upon learning and ensure that feedback to teachers is consistently focused on accelerating students' progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils **is good**

- Students enter the school with standards that are well below average, particularly in reading and writing. They make good progress and leave the school having attained standards that are steadily rising and are similar to those found nationally. Students supported by the pupil premium make good progress and the gap between their achievement and that of their peers is less than that found nationally. Students from minority ethnic groups also make good progress.
- Standards in English indicate consistently good progress. Standards in mathematics, which have been weaker, have improved significantly due to decisive leadership and more focused, consistent teaching that meets students' needs and captures their interest. Students' skills in numeracy are developed well in mathematics, science, physical education and design and technology.
- Students who are disabled or who have special educational needs are supported effectively and make progress commensurate with that of their peers. Individual support programmes provided by the school break down barriers to learning and enable most students to catch up rapidly. Students report positively on the impact of intensive support for their reading. One commented, 'reading is fun now and I like to try different books.'
- The progress of higher-attaining students has been boosted by more challenging teaching and an enhanced extra-curricular programme that includes courses such as GCSE astronomy. The proportion of students achieving the highest grades has risen, reflecting good progress from their starting points.
- The school actively encourages students to read widely for information and enjoyment. Students' oracy and writing are developed successfully in English and art lessons, but are not yet fostered confidently by all teachers in other subjects. A good quality professional development programme has been developed in school to tackle this need.
- Students' personal development is strong in response to good opportunities for teamwork, evidenced in the school's success in a national enterprise challenge.

The quality of teaching **is good**

- The majority of teaching meets students' needs and enables them to make good progress. Teachers are ambitious for their students' success. Most plan interesting lessons that students respond to enthusiastically. A minority of teaching requires improvement and leads to slower progress.
- Some teaching is outstanding and secures rapid learning, as was the case in a creatively designed English lesson, in which students' understanding of punctuation and grammar was enhanced when they built plastic models representing features of writing used by their peers, and matched these to GCSE assessment criteria.
- Students particularly enjoy lessons that are active, practical and 'related to life.' They relish taking responsibility for their learning. For example, in physical education and dance lessons where teaching was outstanding, they assessed their own skills, articulated clear understanding as to how their performances could be enhanced, and supported their peers in making effective improvements. In a food technology lesson where teaching was outstanding, students' team working enabled them to design and prepare professional quality potato salads.
- Teachers plan their lessons carefully, incorporating varied activities and opportunities for assessment. The best teaching is characterised by flexibility and innovation. A few lessons require improvement because students become passive when there is too much input from teachers at the expense of their independent learning, or because teachers do not deviate from their plans in response to students' progress during lessons.
- Most teachers mark students' work regularly and provide students with helpful comments as to

how they might improve their work. However, some of their feedback is not specific enough to accelerate progress. Students do not always routinely act on their teachers' feedback, particularly with regard to improving the composition and accuracy of their writing.

The behaviour and safety of pupils is good

- Most students behave well, are courteous and friendly. They value learning and cooperate well with their teachers.
- The school's streamlined behaviour policy is consistently applied. The monitoring of behaviour and of learning is closely linked and there is effective communication between subject leaders, pastoral leaders and teachers so that any dips in performance or behaviour are spotted quickly and tackled appropriately. Most students appreciate the school's rewards, respect boundaries and consider sanctions to be reasonable. Very few students are excluded from the school.
- Bullying is infrequent but when incidents occur, students are actively involved in a restorative justice process that enables positive relationships to be built and ensures that repeat offences are extremely rare. Different forms of bullying, including homophobic, racist and cyber-bullying are discussed openly and maturely in school. Students are tolerant and respectful of their individual differences. They know how to keep themselves safe and willingly take care of each other, including through involvement in the school's mentoring programme.
- Students feel safe and well supported. New arrivals to the school benefit from a smooth transition process that enables them to settle to learning swiftly. Students who are disabled or have special educational needs are provided with additional support through a 'team around the child' approach that helps problems to be identified promptly and resolved.
- Attendance has improved strongly and is similar to the national level. The school has taken concerted and effective action, in partnership with parents and external agencies, to reduce the proportion of students who are persistently absent from school. Very few students are late to school and almost all arrive to their lessons punctually.
- The vast majority of parents who expressed a view agreed that behaviour is good at the school.

The leadership and management is good

- The headteacher and the deputy headteacher have rapidly secured the support of staff and brought about a transformation in teaching and learning that underpins the school's sustained improvement. Senior leaders are principled and pragmatic. As one student stated, 'we always know that they want the very best for us, and they work with us to help us reach our targets.'
- Effective communication channels have been developed, both within school and between school and the wider community, leading to a clear understanding of expectations and priorities. The school aspires to be 'a family of faith and learning,' values which are recognised by staff, students and their families.
- Senior leaders have streamlined management responsibilities, strengthened accountability and decisively challenged underperformance. Staff are clear as to leaders' expectations of their work and confident that their professional development needs are being met. As one teacher stated, 'we have never worked so hard; but it's rewarding and we feel valued.'
- Middle leaders fulfil their duties zealously and take responsibility for the quality of work in their departments. New post holders are well supported, both through formal arrangements and peer mentoring.
- Leaders at all levels have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Self-evaluation processes have been effectively moderated by the local authority. On occasions, observations of lessons focus too much on teachers' input rather than on the impact of teaching on students' progress. Feedback to teachers sometimes lacks reflection on

students' learning.

- The curriculum is of good quality and meets students' needs. Residential experiences, cultural visits and regular visitors provide enrichment. Extra-curricular activities are numerous and varied, including a range of sports and artistic opportunities. Students are well supported as they prepare for the transition into further education or training.
 - Students' spiritual development is fostered strongly, as shown in thought-provoking assemblies celebrating stewardship. Students discuss and respect each other's beliefs and the school operates as a harmonious and tolerant community. Their cultural understanding is strengthened through drama, art and music where they consider a range of cultural influences. Strong social and moral development is reflected in students' thoughtful behaviour and in classroom discussions, such as in consideration of human uniqueness in religious education.
 - Discrimination in any form is tackled vigorously and equal opportunities are strongly promoted.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - actively promotes the school's ethos and values
 - demonstrates ambition for the academic achievement and personal growth of students
 - ensures that the school's resources, including the pupil premium, are effectively targeted and well managed
 - fulfils its statutory duties, including ensuring that the school is a safe place
 - seeks appropriate training to ensure that its members have up-to-date knowledge and the relevant skills to provide both support and challenge
 - holds the school's leaders to account in a rigorous, fair and constructive way and ensures that performance management is used to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	119804
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	395583

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	750
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dennis Ford
Headteacher	Xavier Bowers
Date of previous school inspection	17-18 June 2009
Telephone number	01254 233458
Fax number	01254 236355
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