

# St Mary's Catholic High School

Manchester Road, Astley, Manchester, M29 7EE

**Inspection dates** 18–19 March 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students do not make good progress in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Teaching is not consistently good across subjects and year groups.
- Teachers do not use information about students' progress consistently well to match learning activities to their abilities, particularly for the most able students.
- Teachers' expectations are not high regarding the quantity, quality and presentation of students' classwork and homework. They do not always ask questions effectively to assess students' learning, or identify and address gaps in their knowledge and understanding.
- Too many teachers do not mark students' work regularly, or show them how to improve their work and check that they follow the advice given.
- Different groups of students do not make equally good progress in their learning. Boys, disadvantaged students and those who are disabled or have special educational needs tend to achieve less than other groups.
- Recent initiatives to improve teaching and learning and raise achievement are not secure and it is too soon to see their full effect.
- Leaders have not established a culture of high expectations. Although they have begun to set aspirational targets for students, they do not yet check the quality of teaching rigorously.
- Governors have not ensured that leaders have checked the effectiveness of the school's recent initiatives to raise standards and close gaps in attainment for boys, disadvantaged students and those who are disabled or have special educational needs.

### The school has the following strengths

- The sixth form is good. Students are taught well and enjoy a wide range of subjects that match their interests and aptitudes. As a result they make better progress than the younger students. Many go on to good universities.
- An extensive programme of educational visits, residential trips, sporting competitions, arts clubs and community service supports students' personal development well.
- The vast majority of students are courteous, polite and friendly. Behaviour is good and improving. Safeguarding procedures are good and students say they feel safe in the school.
- Students in all key stages have access to good careers advice.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school. Five observations were completed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors observed breaks and lunchtimes, and attended tutorial periods.
- Discussions were held with students, staff, governors, the headteacher, a representative from the Archdiocese of Liverpool, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 40 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and correspondence from parents. They also took account of 35 responses to staff questionnaires.
- A wide range of documents was examined including samples of students' work, information about students' progress, the school's development plan and self-evaluation summary, records of any poor behaviour, records of governors' meetings and safeguarding documents.
- Inspectors listened to students read, and observed reading support lessons and the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make).

## Inspection team

Sherry Gladwin, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Andrew Vind	Additional Inspector
John Greevy	Additional Inspector
Steven Caldecott	Additional Inspector
Teresa Roche	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are White British. The proportions of minority ethnic students and of those who speak English as an additional language are below average.
- An above-average proportion of students are disabled or have special educational needs.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported by the pupil premium is below average. This is additional funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- A small number of students attend off-site work-related courses at Cast, Venture Learning and Fixit.
- The headteacher was seconded to St Gregory's Catholic High School during the summer term 2014.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that more students make good progress in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics, by ensuring that teachers:
  - mark students' work in line with the school's marking policy, clearly showing them how to improve their work and ensuring that they follow teachers' advice
  - use students' progress information to plan learning matched to students' abilities
  - show consistently high expectations for the quantity, quality and presentation of students' classwork and homework
  - ask questions effectively to assess students' learning in order to identify and address gaps in their knowledge and understanding.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership, management and governance by ensuring that:
  - leaders and governors check the impact of specific initiatives to improve the achievement of boys, disadvantaged students and those who are disabled or have special educational needs
  - senior and middle leaders robustly check the quality of teaching and learning, in order to secure new initiatives and raise standards.

An external review of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders have not been strong enough to ensure teachers implement new initiatives consistently well. Senior and middle leaders do not monitor students' progress tightly enough or check teaching rigorously to ensure students' work is marked regularly and in line with school policy. As a result, although students behave well, leaders have not yet created a culture where teaching and achievement are routinely good.
- The headteacher has the confidence of governors, parents, staff and students. A few parents used the Parent View online questionnaire and correspondence to share concerns about the quality of teaching and students' progress. Inspectors found that inconsistency between teachers slows students' progress. Leaders do not rigorously check that teachers assess students' learning or identify and address gaps in their knowledge and understanding effectively.
- Middle leaders such as those in charge of subjects are growing in their effectiveness to improve teaching. They check students' progress and the quality of their work to identify those who are falling behind. Participation in joint lesson observations with senior leaders helps to develop middle leaders' understanding of how to improve teaching.
- Staff have individual performance targets linked to the school's development plan. More recently, these have been focused on ensuring that all groups of students make good progress. This is helping staff to understand the level of underachievement that there has been for some groups in the school, particularly boys, disadvantaged students and those who are disabled or have special educational needs. Although there has been some improvement, progress for these groups is not yet good.
- The school's self-evaluation is too generous. Not enough teachers have sufficiently high expectations for students. Some members of staff do not use the information they have about students' progress consistently well to match learning activities to students' abilities. Consequently, students do not complete enough work in class and do not make good enough progress towards their targets.
- The school has developed several 'pathways' or study options for students in Key Stages 4 and 5. These include a range of work-related and academic courses that suit students' aptitudes and abilities. Good careers advice and guidance helps students to make informed choices about their future studies and life beyond school.
- The broad range of subjects taught includes artistic, technical, cultural, mathematical and linguistic opportunities. Classroom learning is enhanced through assemblies and personal, social and health education. Activities that further enrich students' experiences include visiting speakers, sport, drama, music, art, educational visits and residential trips. These help to develop students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, and prepare them well for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders tackle inappropriate behaviour robustly. This approach has decreased the number of exclusions, and instances of bullying, and other forms of discrimination previously experienced by students. Leaders help students from all backgrounds and abilities to get on well together. However, leaders have not taken effective action to ensure equal success for all groups of students.
- The local authority provides limited support for this school.
- The pupil premium is used to provide a range of enrichment activities and academic support for disadvantaged students. However, these students do not yet make good progress and the help and support provided for disadvantaged students and those who are disabled or have special educational needs have not been checked fully for effectiveness.
- The behaviour, attendance and progress of students studying off site are monitored closely so that they attend well and are kept safe. Students participate in courses that are matched well to their needs and make good progress.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is effective and meets statutory requirements.

Leaders ensure that staff are suitably trained in safeguarding practices and procedures.

#### ■ The governance of the school:

- Governance requires improvement, because the governing body does not carry out checks on the school's performance with sufficient rigour.
- The governors bring a range of knowledge, skills and experience to their role. They are committed to the school and visit often to keep themselves informed. Governors monitor students' behaviour and academic progress against targets. They receive regular information on students' progress and performance through the headteacher's reports, and are trained to understand this information.
- Governors identify the school's strengths and areas for development. However, they have not been robust enough in ensuring that senior leaders thoroughly check students' progress or carry out initiatives to improve teaching and learning. Governors have not evaluated the effectiveness of the approaches used to promote the good progress of boys, disadvantaged students and those with a disability or special educational need.
- Governors understand the value of good teaching and tackling underperformance in securing high standards for students. They manage the headteacher's performance closely. The headteacher's own targets are used to determine the targets of other staff and raise staff expectations. Pay rises or promotions for teachers are linked appropriately to students' progress and good teaching.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

#### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. The vast majority show positive attitudes to learning and cooperate well with adults in the school. Students have a good understanding of right and wrong, and the majority behave in a mature, polite and courteous manner. Students take pride in their appearance and show consideration for others, providing assistance and holding doors open for them to pass through.
- In lessons where expectations are high, students listen politely to teachers and to each other, taking turns to make contributions to discussions, and produce work of a high quality. Even when teachers do not show such high expectations, and students fail to complete a quantity and quality of work that reflects the standard of presentation expected for their age and ability, they rarely act inappropriately or disrupt learning. Students value opportunities to serve the school as house captains and school council members.
- Rewards are used effectively to motivate the vast majority of students to work hard and achieve well. All year groups spoke about the 'vivo points' system and students were keen to receive these for good attendance, behaviour, attitudes and achievement. These points usually result in enjoyable school trips. The reduction in fixed-term exclusions continues year on year. Care is taken to record and report unacceptable behaviour and keep parents and carers informed.
- Students attend school regularly and attendance is in line with the national average. The school works well with parents to promote good attendance. Absence from school is closely monitored so that all groups of students attend well. Students are punctual and move between classes quickly so that lessons start on time and continue without disruption. The pupil premium funding is used effectively to improve the attendance of disadvantaged students.
- The school works well with external agencies to support disabled students and those who have special educational needs. In addition, the school's work with students and their parents means that clear support plans help students who have difficulty in managing their own behaviour to do so. Many of these students succeed in improving their behaviour and make a positive contribution to the school community.
- Students attending off-site courses have good levels of behaviour and attendance. Their attitudes to learning are positive and they make good progress in their learning.

#### Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Staff help students to understand risk, including when using the internet. The local police work with the school to make students aware of cyber-bullying, and the school provides good support for students and parents through its website and workshops. Students say they feel safe in the school. They spoke of improvements to behaviour and

attitudes to learning.

- Students say that although there is some unpleasantness in the form of name-calling, they are confident that teachers will deal quickly with this when it is reported. Any rare incidents of a racist nature are reported and dealt with firmly. Some parents and students expressed concerns about the behaviour of a small minority. Inspectors found that leaders dealt firmly with inappropriate behaviour when it arose.
- Students attending courses off site are kept safe. All safeguarding requirements are met.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Leaders at all levels have not checked that teachers fully carry out new approaches to teaching. As a result, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching within departments and across the school continue to hold back students' progress.
- Teachers do not use information on students' progress consistently well to plan learning activities that match work closely to students' abilities. As a result, different ability groups are not always challenged to achieve their potential, particularly the most able students.
- Teachers do not use the school's marking policy consistently well when they mark students' work. Comments do not clearly show students what they need to do to improve their work and teachers do not routinely check that students respond to these comments and make required improvements.
- Teachers' expectations are not consistently high regarding the quantity, quality and presentation of students' work. Consequently, some students do not produce enough work during class or at home. At times, written work is untidy. In classes where teachers have high expectations students rise to the challenge, produce work of a high standard and make good progress.
- Regular meetings to check students' progress allow staff to identify those who are not progressing in line with expectations. Support through small-group and one-to-one sessions are designed to help students close gaps in their attainment. These sessions are beginning to help students make faster progress. Leaders have not evaluated the effectiveness of the help and support provided so that they know which approaches have the best impact and are worth maintaining.
- Some teachers do not ask questions effectively to assess students' learning in class. Often, questions require only simple answers and fail to probe understanding or encourage students to reflect on their work. Consequently, gaps in students' knowledge and understanding are not identified and follow-up learning does not address these gaps. Where teachers use questioning effectively, students respond enthusiastically and contribute thoughtful responses, so teachers are able to assess learning and build on students' understanding.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work together to plan small-group support sessions for students who are disabled or have special educational needs. This is proving effective and many of these students are making better progress. However, they are not yet making good progress and leaders have not evaluated the effectiveness of the different means of support.
- Reading is taught well and students use phonics (the sounds that letters make) and other approaches in their reading. Some students said that additional support is helping them to make better progress, so that they are on track to achieve their target grades. Students enjoy reading in a range of genres. They use information and communication technology well to support their school work. However, some students are not challenged sufficiently to reach standards in line with their abilities in literacy and mathematics.

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Students join the school with attainment that is above the national average. In 2014 they left Year 11 with above-average attainment in a range of GCSE subjects, including English and mathematics, but should have done better. More recently, students have been set demanding targets. However, attainment has not yet risen significantly due to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.

- In 2014, broadly average proportions of Year 11 students made expected progress in English and mathematics overall. However, too many boys, disadvantaged students and those who are disabled or have special educational needs failed to make expected progress from their starting points. The school's tracking information shows that more students are now making expected progress. However, the progress of boys, disadvantaged students and those who are disabled or have special educational needs remains slower than that of other students.
- The attainment of disadvantaged students eligible for the pupil premium funding has not been as high as that of other students. In 2014, the eligible Year 11 students were, on average, more than a GCSE grade behind other students in English, and two grades behind in mathematics. They were more than a GCSE grade behind other students nationally in both subjects. School information indicates that better help and guidance are now beginning to close the gap between disadvantaged students and others, but they are not yet making good progress.
- Some of the most able students did not make good progress in 2014. Inconsistencies in teaching mean that these students are often not challenged to produce their best work in class because learning activities are not matched to their abilities.
- Most disabled students and those who have special educational needs did not make good progress in 2014 in a range of subjects including English and mathematics. More effective support is helping them to make better progress this year. However, their progress is not rapid and their needs are not always met because teachers do not always assess learning in the classroom carefully to inform future planning and close gaps in students' knowledge and understanding.
- The Year 7 'catch-up' funding is used to help students close gaps in their learning in literacy and numeracy. Students benefit from help and additional lessons in the student support centre, which helps them to develop age-appropriate skills in English and mathematics.
- The progress of minority ethnic groups, and of those who speak English as an additional language, is in line with that of other groups of students.
- In 2013, students were entered early for GCSE mathematics to give them the opportunity to improve their grades. The policy was not as successful as hoped. Some students lost motivation and did not seek to improve their grade. The school no longer enters students for early GCSE examinations.

### The sixth form provision

is good

- Students in the sixth form make better progress in their learning than younger students because of better teaching and higher expectations for what they can achieve.
- Students enjoy their studies and achieve well. They have access to good impartial careers advice, which helps them to plan their futures. Virtually all students progress to university, employment or training. There are no marked differences in the attainment and progress of different groups of students. The vast majority have high aspirations, and increasing proportions go on to study at Russell Group universities. The proportions of students who stay on in the sixth form are good for all courses. Achievement in some work-related courses is outstanding.
- The quality of teaching and learning in both work-related and academic subjects is good. Teachers plan learning with a clear purpose. Students respond well to teachers' questions, providing thoughtful responses that demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the subject. They make good progress towards their targets and outcomes in 2015 are on track to be even higher than in 2014.
- The behaviour and safety of students are good. Students are courteous, polite and friendly. They are smart in their appearance and participate well in school life by leading aspects of the school's community service and fundraising. Sixth form students are good role models for younger students. Attendance and punctuality are average.
- The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Leaders are ambitious for students to do well and have a clear plan for improvement. The range of subjects available is broad and includes both academic and work-related options to suit the aptitudes and interests of the students.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	106538
<b>Local authority</b>	Wigan
<b>Inspection number</b>	453318

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1637
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	352
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jack Farrimond
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andrew Dawson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 February 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01942 884144
<b>Fax number</b>	01942 884357
<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@smchs.org.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store St  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2015

