

St Mary's Catholic High School

Manchester Road, Astley, Tyldesley, Manchester M29 7EE

Inspection dates

29–30 November 2016

Overall effectiveness

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, do not make enough progress in mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils have not made enough progress in science and humanities subjects, and the most able of them have not made enough progress in English.
- Leaders have not analysed pupils' attainment and progress well enough. As a result, teachers do not receive enough information to help them plan and leaders and governors do not have a precise view about how well pupils, particularly the disadvantaged and the most able, are making progress.
- Leaders have not evaluated the impact of pupil premium funding and have not fully implemented the recommendations of the review.
- Leaders have not ensured that targets for pupils are sufficiently aspirational.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good. Some teachers do not use questions to encourage pupils to explain their thinking.
- In some lessons, the most able pupils do not have work that challenges them to do their best.
- The behaviour of some pupils disrupts the learning of others in lessons.
- Some pupils and parents say that the school does not deal with bullying effectively.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is below that of other pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- The leadership of the sixth form is good and students make good progress.
- Leaders have ensured that boys have made good progress.
- The school has provided effective support for middle leaders to develop the curriculum and their leadership and management skills.
- The quality of pupils' written work and presentation skills has improved.
- Pupils receive good-quality careers guidance. Nearly all pupils move on to further education, training or employment when they leave school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all pupils, including the disadvantaged and the most able, make at least good progress, by:
 - securing the improvements in mathematics, science and humanities
 - using accurate information to plan teaching to meet pupils' needs
 - ensuring that teachers use probing questions which require pupils to think deeply and provide thoughtful responses
 - sharing good practice across all subjects.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - all governors and teachers have information which helps them to make judgements about the performance of all pupils and of different groups of pupils, particularly the disadvantaged
 - the recommendations from the external review of the pupil premium funding are fully implemented
 - leaders and governors check the impact of specific initiatives to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils
 - leaders set challenging targets for all pupils.
- Improve the quality of personal development, behaviour and welfare, by:
 - developing the new behaviour systems to reduce incidents of poor behaviour
 - taking steps to reassure pupils and parents that concerns about bullying are taken seriously by leaders
 - improving attendance, particularly for the disadvantaged pupils so that they make at least good progress.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

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

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not used the information they have about pupils' attainment and progress well enough. This has hampered the capacity of middle leaders, teachers and governors to raise standards more quickly.
- The lack of information has meant that the attainment and progress of the most able pupils have not been analysed carefully enough. As a result, leaders and governors have not focused enough on raising the achievement of these pupils.
- Leaders did not take sufficient account of the review of pupil premium funding recommended at the last inspection. While they have increased the support for disadvantaged pupils, they have not evaluated the impact of this on their progress. As a result, they do not have an accurate view of how well these pupils are doing.
- Leaders set targets for pupils but they do not check whether these are sufficiently aspirational and whether all staff are using them to make sure that pupils are fully stretched.
- Additional support has been put in place to help disadvantaged pupils make faster progress. This includes interventions for those who have fallen behind, a hub in the local community to work with pupils and parents after school, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and additional careers guidance. In this way, the school ensures that a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils take part in additional activities. However, leaders have not evaluated their impact. As a result, leaders do not have a complete picture of these pupils' attainment, progress, attendance or behaviour.
- Leaders have taken action to tackle the poor standards in mathematics. The new subject leader has taken steps to ensure that planning reflects increased expectations. Some teachers are now expecting pupils to explain their reasoning and, as a result, pupils are beginning to make better progress.
- Leaders' work to improve the quality of teaching has had a positive impact. There is now a consistent approach to planning learning. This is not yet secure in all lessons, however, and time is sometimes lost when teachers do not insist on a prompt start to learning.
- Middle and senior leaders carry out regular checks on the quality of learning. A programme of staff training, linked to the school's development priorities, is securing improvements in teaching. The school has made good use of strong practice both within and outside the school to improve the quality of teaching.
- The arrangements for managing the performance of teachers are robust and teachers' targets match the school's priorities. Leaders have tackled weak teaching. Those unable to meet leaders' expectations are given clear plans and timelines to improve. The recruitment and retention of staff are good. There are very strong systems in place to support new teachers.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders are ensuring that the demands of the new curriculum are reflected in teachers' planning and this was seen in a number of lessons, including some science lessons. The proportion of pupils entering subjects that

form the English Baccalaureate is increasing. However, proportionately fewer disadvantaged pupils are being entered than are other pupils in the school.

- The school provides subject-based extra-curricular opportunities as well as opportunities outside the classroom. Many of these promote opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These include participation in the Cafod leadership programme, trips to Iceland and Poland, residential activities and a range of music and drama productions. Pupils say that they value these opportunities. There are high rates of participation by pupils from a variety of backgrounds.
- Pupils are taught about democracy, law, respect and tolerance in a range of subjects, including assemblies and form time and some pupils spoke of how they value discussing democracy and making a contribution to charities. As a result, they have good understanding of British values.
- The additional funding for pupils who need to catch up with English and mathematics has had a positive impact in English and pupils now have higher standards in literacy, but its use and effectiveness has not been checked closely enough in mathematics. Pupils made good progress in an additional numeracy lesson, for example, because the teaching assistant made sure that the tasks were purposeful. The school does not have a rationale, however, for why this is only provided for pupils in Year 8.

Governance of the school

- Governors are experienced and share a commitment to bring improvements to the school. Their capacity to hold the school to account, however, particularly for the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils, has been hampered by the poor quality of information provided by leaders. As a result, governors have not been able to ask searching questions about the progress of different groups of pupils across subjects. This means the governing body has not been able to hold the school to account for the impact of funding for disadvantaged pupils.
- Governors ensure that arrangements for managing the performance of leaders and teachers are now more focused on raising standards.
- Governors are trained in statutory safeguarding requirements and strategies to prevent discrimination.
- Governors have a clear view of the curriculum and wider opportunities provided for pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All checks are carried out when new staff are recruited to work with pupils.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are in place so that all staff know what to do if they have concerns about pupils' welfare.
- There are strong partnerships with other agencies responsible for protecting children and the school provides high-quality support for vulnerable pupils.
- Staff training, including training on the 'Prevent' duty, is up to date.

- A number of pupils and parents expressed concerns about how the school deals with bullying. While the school has a bullying policy and many pupils said that they know where to go if they are worried about bullying, leaders have not ensured that every pupil believes that their concerns will be taken seriously.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The previous monitoring visit and this inspection show that teaching, learning and assessment have improved since the last inspection. However, teaching is not yet consistently good, particularly in mathematics, languages and humanities subjects. Many lessons provide pupils with interesting tasks that expect them to think hard and produce work of high quality, but some are slow to start and contain work which is too easy. When this happens, pupils lose focus, show poor attitudes to learning and do not make enough progress.
- In some lessons, teachers' questioning does not expect pupils to think deeply and teachers accept brief, incomplete answers. This approach hinders pupils' ability to think accurately and precisely. The promotion of literacy skills, including reading, speaking and listening has not been a key priority in all departments.
- With the exception of the sixth form, information that teachers receive about the achievement of pupils has not been sharp enough to make sure that all make at least expected progress. Teachers carry out assessments but do not receive information about pupils' progress from their starting points. This means that teachers do not systematically plan to ensure good or better progress for all groups of pupils.
- The behaviour of a minority of pupils adversely affects learning in some classes. This happens when teachers do not plan interesting activities and pupils become bored or distracted.
- Since the last inspection the school has focused on making sure that pupils respond to teachers' suggestions, both oral and written, to help them improve their work. This, together with teachers' increased expectations of the content and presentation of pupils' work across most subjects, is contributing to improvements in learning.
- Strengths are evident in a number of subjects, including English, drama, physical education, history and computing. Teachers demonstrate and model well what pupils are learning so that they have a clear idea of what is expected of them. Some teachers communicate high expectations and use questions effectively to deepen pupils' understanding. In these lessons, pupils make most gains in their learning.
- Teaching for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good because leaders provide a good level of support for them. Some pupils benefit from learning life skills as well as more formal subjects and, as a result, they are making expected progress.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Most pupils say they feel safe and that the school deals with bullying, but a number of pupils and parents expressed concerns. A number of pupils say that incidents of bullying are not always resolved quickly.
- The school uses a range of strategies to tackle bullying, but leaders have not evaluated their impact. Year leaders are experienced and provide good support, and the school covers bullying in form time and assemblies. Pupils have access to a hub where they can talk through their concerns. However, these approaches are not coordinated sufficiently to make sure that every pupil believes that bullying will be addressed swiftly. The work of the pupils' group on anti-bullying is in the early stages and pupils spoken with during the inspection said that they would like to become involved in this.
- Pupils have opportunities to understand how to stay safe and foster healthy lifestyles. They are aware of hazards such as the inappropriate use of social media.
- The school's focus on British values is linked with its distinctive Christian ethos. Pupils' understanding of tolerance, democracy and making a contribution is developed through form time and daily assemblies.
- The school has a strong programme of careers guidance and pupils spoke highly of this. Good links are in place with universities and employers.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. The school's revised behaviour policy, introduced at the start of the academic year, has raised expectations of behaviour. This has resulted in an increase in the number of incidents that require the support of a senior leader. The school recognises that pupils' behaviour is not yet good enough.
- Some pupils do not behave well in lessons or at social times. Inspectors saw some disruption to learning through poor behaviour. At breaktime, some pupils were disrespectful to staff and did not take notice of the requests to behave sensibly.
- The number of exclusions has decreased and overall attendance is in line with the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is still below average, however, and this remains a priority for the school. Leaders are using imaginative approaches to work with parents and pupils on the importance of good attendance, but the impact of this work has not yet been evaluated.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision. Leaders have good systems in place to ensure that the attendance and behaviour of these pupils are good.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils do not make enough progress in mathematics. The attainment and progress of pupils at the end of Year 11 in 2016 was below that of other pupils nationally. Outcomes for pupils currently in the school are beginning to improve as a result of the actions of the new leader.
- Disadvantaged pupils have not made enough progress in mathematics, science and humanities in 2016. The most able pupils in this group have not made good progress in English, languages and humanities.
- Progress is better for disadvantaged pupils currently in the school. Evidence from lessons where there are high expectations shows that all pupils, including the disadvantaged and most able make good progress. The school's information indicates that outcomes are improving for these pupils, with the exception of pupils in Year 9.
- The most able have not achieved the highest grades in a number of subjects. While these pupils have a wide range of opportunities beyond the curriculum, leaders have not used information about their prior attainment carefully enough to make sure that they make the progress expected of them in lessons.
- Leaders' work with middle leaders to improve the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection has resulted in boys making better progress at the end of Year 11 in 2016. This is as a result of the support received from a number of local schools.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and, as a result, make at least the progress expected of them.
- Some pupils made above-expected progress in subjects such as art and design, English, religious education and Spanish.
- The use of a reading programme has improved the reading ages of a number of pupils. Pupils have opportunities to read aloud in some of their form lessons, in English, history, Spanish and religious education. When this happens, their confidence and understanding improve.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision achieve well because they are following courses which meet their needs and leaders make careful checks on their progress.
- The proportion of pupils moving on to further education, employment or training is above average. This reflects the high quality of pupils' careers advice and guidance, which has also been recognised nationally.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Students achieve well. Leadership and management of the sixth form are effective because leaders have a clear vision for the sixth form. The use of students' prior attainment information is used more sharply in the sixth form than in the rest of the school. This means that leaders and teachers have a clear view of what students are capable of achieving. Together with heads of department, they provide appropriate subject study programmes. Retention of students is broadly in line with the national average.
- Progress towards students' targets is closely monitored by leaders. The targets set for

students in A level subjects are now more rigorous. There are increased expectations in subjects such as mathematics, business, geography, chemistry and Spanish where progress had been below that of the national average. Students make outstanding progress in vocational subjects and good progress in English, psychology, biology and sociology.

- There are retake lessons for students who did not achieve a good GCSE grade in mathematics or English. English has a high success rate for these students, but very few students improve their grade in mathematics.
- Teaching in the sixth form is underpinned by high levels of teacher expertise. Teachers have good-quality information about what students are capable of achieving and use this to provide strong challenge in well-structured lessons. They pose questions which encourage students to expand on and justify their answers. Students rise to these expectations and effective examples were seen in English, religious education and physical education.
- Students conduct themselves well and their attitudes to learning are good. They value their positive relationships with teachers and the support and guidance they receive. They take up opportunities to support younger pupils and are positive about fundraising for charities.
- The curriculum prepares students well for the next stages of education, training or employment. A range of non-qualification activities contributes well to students' personal development and well-being. The enrichment programme is strong and includes access to a certified programme on Catholic citizenship. Students know how to stay safe and are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Some tutor time is not used productively because students are not always punctual. Attendance has been an area of focus and leaders' actions have resulted in higher rates of attendance.
- Safeguarding is effective in the sixth form and students say they feel safe.

School details

Unique reference number	106538
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	10022468

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,595
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	320
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jack Farrimond
Headteacher	Andrew Dawson
Telephone number	01942 884144
Website	https://stmaryschs.org.uk
Email address	enquiries@smchs.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 March 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportions of minority ethnic pupils and those who speak English as an additional language are below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards in 2015.
- A small number of pupils attend off-site, work-related courses at Cast, Venture Learning and Fixit.
- The school has received support from the local authority, Oakfield High School, Hawkley Hall School and Our Lady Queen of Peace School.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all key stages. A number of observations were completed with senior leaders. Inspectors observed breaks and lunchtimes, tutorials and an assembly.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, governors, curriculum leaders, other members of staff and groups of pupils in each year group.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including the school’s self-evaluation and action plans, minutes of meetings of the governing body, safeguarding documents, records of pupils’ behaviour and information about pupils’ attainment and progress.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading.
- Inspectors took into account the views of parents from the 109 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire. They also spoke with some parents.
- The views of staff were gained from the 48 responses to the online staff questionnaire and from discussions with individual teachers.

Inspection team

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