

Holy Family Catholic High School

Virgins Lane, Thornton, Liverpool, Merseyside L23 4UL

Inspection dates

8–9 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
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 good school

- Senior leaders are skilled and determined. They have secured the improvements required since the last inspection to provide a good quality of education at the school.
- Leaders know the school well. They plan and review actions to improve the school meticulously and effectively. Leaders are not complacent. They are well equipped to further strengthen pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders, including governors, promote positive values clearly and consistently. They set and support a culture where pupils are confident, considerate of others and hard working. As a result, pupils enjoy the school and attend regularly.
- Subject leadership is good. Subject leaders play an important role in improving teaching.
- Teaching is good across a range of subjects, including English, mathematics, physical education (PE) and Spanish. Although teaching in geography, history and science is effective, it is not as consistently strong as in other subjects.
- Leaders' work to strengthen the curriculum is effective. Where the curriculum is strongest, such as in English, teachers provide pupils with frequent opportunities to think about, deepen and extend what they know and understand.
- Pupils' outcomes require improvement. Pupils make strong progress in English. Despite making better progress, pupils are not consistently working at the standard of which they are capable in geography, history and science. The progress of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is securely improving but does not match that of others nationally.
- The management of the additional funding provided for disadvantaged pupils is effective. These pupils attend the school regularly, behave well and make better progress than previously.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are courteous, happy and confident. Pupils' conduct around the school and attitudes to learning are positive.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective. Pupils understand and value differences, and say they feel confident and safe to be who they want to be.
- A strong culture of safeguarding exists throughout the school. Pupils say staff know them and care about their well-being.
- Students are taught well and make good progress in the academic and vocational courses which are provided in the sixth form.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build upon improvements to pupils' progress by ensuring that:
 - pupils make consistently good progress across a range of subjects, especially geography, history and science
 - the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND continues to improve.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The actions of senior leaders to overcome the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection have been effective. Leaders have been resilient and relentless in their efforts to overcome the barriers which previously hindered pupils' success. The improvement is evident. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is now good and, as a result, pupils' progress is improving rapidly and securely.
- Parents, carers and members of the community have full confidence in the school's leadership. As a result, the number of pupils on roll has risen significantly since the last inspection. This is the school of choice for many parents and pupils.
- The improvements have happened at a time of significant disruption to the education of many pupils and to the school. About one quarter of the pupils who completed Year 11 in 2017 joined at the end of Year 9 from a neighbouring school which was closing. In 2018 the proportion was around one third.
- Leaders' actions to secure the effective pastoral and academic transition of these pupils were well managed. However, many of these pupils arrived with poor attendance rates, higher-than-average exclusion rates and weak progress in key stage 3. The actions taken by leaders to integrate these pupils into the school community were successful. By the time that they left the school, these pupils' attendance and behaviour were good and they all moved on to next steps in education or training. However, despite leaders' best efforts, many of these pupils struggled to fully catch up on their gaps in learning from key stage 3.
- Leadership has strengthened significantly since the last inspection. Leaders know the school well. The capacity of leaders to monitor, evaluate and refine the actions they take to improve the school has been transformed since the previous inspection and is fully effective. As a result, leaders are clear about what works well and where there are areas requiring further attention to ensure pupils' securely good progress.
- For example, the leadership of teaching, learning and assessment has become highly effective and leaders have secured good-quality teaching. There is an impressive professional culture throughout the school, in which teachers routinely reflect upon and improve their teaching. Leaders and teachers accurately understand the strengths and weaker aspects of each and every teacher. Training is very well planned and implemented. Teachers fully support the training programme which leaders have introduced because they are provided with the time and expertise to improve. It supports effectively the newly and recently qualified staff at the school and has also resulted in stronger teaching from established staff. As a result, the progress pupils make is quickly and securely improving.
- Subject leadership is good. Where necessary, senior leaders provide additional support and quality assurance to ensure that this level of leadership is consistently effective. Subject leaders understand their department's strengths and any areas which require further improvement. Leaders accurately monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make in each subject. Where action is required, for example to

support pupils' better progress, leaders spot this and put support in place to help these pupils catch up.

- Senior leaders have had a sharper focus on securing pupils' good progress since the previous inspection. Their actions to secure good teaching and subject leadership have led to pupils' improved learning and progress across a wide range of subjects. This includes mathematics, which was a weaker area at the time of the previous inspection. In those cases where pupils' progress does not consistently match the performance seen elsewhere, for example in geography, history and science, leaders are taking effective action to remedy this.
- Leaders have strengthened the curriculum since the school was last inspected. As a result, it is effective and, in key stage 3 and key stage 4, pupils are provided with courses and learning experiences which enable them to succeed. The Year 7 curriculum takes account of and builds upon the pupils' primary school experience and prior learning. In both key stages 3 and 4, the curriculum is especially strong in English and Spanish. For example, in English the subject leaders have taken full account of pupils' interests and needs when redesigning what they learn and why. Pupils are provided with numerous opportunities to think deeply and creatively, so they enjoy learning and make strong progress. Occasionally, the curriculum does not provide pupils with work of the highest standards in geography, history and science. However, overall, leaders focus on providing pupils with a suitable range of experiences to extend their knowledge and understanding and apply this learning in new ways.
- Leaders plan and provide a broad range of extra-curricular activities and clubs for pupils. These are popular because they match pupils' wider academic, cultural, artistic and sporting interests. As a result, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, participate equally in the activities provided.
- The careers guidance programme is effective. Pupils receive information throughout key stages 3 and 4 which meets their requirements. This includes independent advice. In 2018, all pupils, including those who joined the school at the end of Year 9 in 2016, moved on to aspirational next steps in education, training or employment.
- The actions taken to support pupils with lower-than-average attainment in literacy and numeracy to catch up by the end of Year 7 are effective.
- Senior leaders have used the pupil premium funding well. There is strong improvement since the previous inspection. Disadvantaged pupils now attend school more regularly, and cases of exclusion have significantly reduced. These pupils benefit from their positive engagement in learning and good teaching. Disadvantaged pupils make much better progress than previously.
- The use of the funding provided for pupils with SEND is effective. Any pupil who enters the school with previously undiagnosed requirements is identified and supported quickly and accurately. The effective leadership of the support for pupils with SEND, including those who require an education, health and care plan, ensures teachers know these pupils well. A small number of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, had individual concerns about aspects of the care and welfare for their children. However, the views of most parents and inspectors' evidence showed that the well-being and health of pupils with SEND are catered for well and their progress is securely improving.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. Governors understand the school's strengths and provide a clear rationale for the next aspects they wish to develop. They take their responsibilities seriously. Skills audits and the training governors undertake have ensured that they bring a balance of relevant educational, financial, personnel and business skills. As a result, governors provide effective challenge and support to leaders. This has helped secure a good standard of education for current pupils.
- Governors set and promote the school's key values. They are based in the school's Christian ethos and unswervingly focus on the care and potential of each person who is part of the school community. Governors take the time to check these values are consistently upheld by leaders and staff at the school.
- Governors' experience of financial management is used effectively to support senior leaders' plans to further strengthen the quality of education.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders maintain effective safeguarding records. They have systematic procedures for checking the backgrounds of staff when they are appointed.
- Leaders are aware of the risk which pupils face, including outside the school. Staff are trained in identifying potential risks to pupils. This includes risks of drug and gang-related crime, child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. Staff take the time to know pupils well, so provide for their safety and well-being effectively.
- School leaders' work with external agencies and parents is effective. Leaders have secured relationships with a range of agencies in order to meet the requirements of pupils. They act swiftly, when required, to secure pupils' safety and well-being. Checks made by inspectors demonstrate that referrals are made to and followed up with external agencies as appropriate.
- Pupils understand the risks which might affect them and how to keep safe, including when online and using mobile devices.
- Pupils know to whom they should report concerns and how to do this.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Since the previous inspection, leaders' actions, including those of subject leaders, have significantly improved the quality of teaching. Pupils benefit from good teaching overall and across a range of subjects and year groups. Teaching is especially strong in English, mathematics, Spanish and PE. In these subjects, teachers use their good subject knowledge to engage pupils in challenging and interesting activities.
- Leaders are aware that the quality of teaching in geography, history and science is not as routinely strong as elsewhere. In these areas, senior leaders' actions to strengthen consistency have resulted in typically effective teaching. For example, a personalised professional development programme for teachers in these subjects means that the quality of teaching is improving, and the weaker aspects previously seen have been

reduced. However, there are more occasions in these subjects than elsewhere when pupils are set tasks which do not challenge or inspire them.

- Teachers support pupils' strong attitudes to learning. As a result, pupils are highly motivated and typically learn with great enthusiasm. Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work showed that they complete the activities that they are set and do so with care and precision.
- Homework is well planned and managed. As a result, pupils take the time to complete it fully and thoughtfully. The activities which pupils undertake are typically effective in providing them opportunities to learn and think about topics which interest them. At other times, homework supports pupils in strengthening any weaknesses in subject knowledge or skills.
- Teachers routinely use the assessment information available about pupils' learning and most set work which matches pupils' needs. As a result, the progress of current pupils of all abilities is securely improving. Training has increasingly motivated teachers to more regularly provide pupils with opportunities to grapple with complex ideas and to think deeply. Pupils welcome and benefit from these activities, especially in English, mathematics, Spanish and PE. In science, history and geography, further strengthening of this aspect is underway, so pupils are learning at a greater depth than previously.
- Teachers in all subjects recognise the need to give attention to pupils' literacy skills. As a result, pupils of all abilities are provided with regular practice and strengthen their skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. This has resulted in higher levels of accuracy, confidence and fluency, demonstrated by pupils' work across their curriculum. This is notably the case for disadvantaged pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident and polite. Inspectors were impressed by pupils' positive and aspirational attitudes. Pupils' high expectation of their futures helps secure their high level of engagement in education.
- Pupils wear their uniform correctly and with pride.
- Pupils benefit from their positive interactions with one another and adults. Pupils mix, play and pursue their own interests at break and lunchtime. The good relationships extend to lessons. Pupils confidently ask questions, express views and read aloud. They listen to others politely.
- Pupils say that bullying is very rare, and that staff deal with it effectively. This includes racist and homophobic bullying. The pupils who spoke to inspectors made it clear that they value people's differences, other faiths and cultures. Inspectors checked bullying records, which show that incidents of bullying are followed up and resolved effectively.
- Pupils say that staff are approachable and considerate of pupils' emotional and physical well-being. The support services provided by leaders are wide-ranging and meet pupils' requirements.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is embedded the school's curriculum. Pupils' explore a range of spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects in lessons and at other times, which helps secure pupils' mature approach to relationships, their responsibilities and their role in modern Britain. Pupils understand and uphold the rights of all.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons. They respect their teachers and one another. Pupils take pride in their work and are keen to learn well. Only rarely does pupils' concentration waver. However, in these cases, the good relationships between staff and pupils are effective in quickly restoring pupils' positive habits.
- Pupils' conduct around the school is consistently good. They move around the school in an orderly manner at breaktime, lunchtime and at the change of lessons. Pupils treat the school environment with respect and do not leave litter lying around.
- Pupils say that they enjoy the school and they would recommend it to others. As a result, attendance rates are above the average nationally. The sharpened focus of leaders, following the previous inspection, to support the better attendance of any pupils at risk of persistent absence has been effective.
- Leaders manage effectively the attendance, behaviour and safeguarding of pupils who attend alternative provision.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2018 at GCSE, on average pupils made less progress than pupils across the country who had achieved similar scores at the end of Year 6. This was notably the case for those pupils who joined the school toward the end of Year 9 from a local school which was closing, especially for boys in this group and those who were disadvantaged.
- Evidence from pupils' work shows that the current picture is more positive. This is because of improvements in teaching at the school since the previous inspection and the significantly reduced numbers of pupils who join the school after Year 7 with disruption to their previous education.
- In most subjects in key stage 3 and key stage 4, more pupils are now achieving standards in line with their capabilities. There are clear signs that this upward trajectory is sustainable. Pupils, including boys, make strong progress in English and Spanish. Their progress has improved significantly in mathematics since the previous inspection and it is typically good. In geography, history and science pupils are making better progress, but do not consistently match the stronger progress evident in other subjects.
- Pupils currently in Year 11 have similar prior attainment to that of last year's Year 11. A series of externally moderated full mock examinations indicates that, in all subjects, by December, results were significantly better than for those who took GCSEs in the summer of 2018.

- Pupils of average ability and the most able pupils are making better progress than previously. They make strongest progress in English, mathematics, Spanish and those other subjects where they are provided with regular opportunities to think about their learning deeply and apply it creatively. Despite an improving performance overall for these pupils in geography, history and science, these opportunities are less in evidence in these subjects.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils has improved markedly, because of effective attendance, behaviour and teaching strategies. However, despite this secure trend trajectory, the progress of these pupils does not yet match that of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.
- Pupils with SEND make better progress from their varying starting points than others did previously because of good teaching and extra help. However, there is scope for these pupils to make even better progress.
- Leaders check effectively on the quality of education for pupils who attend alternative provision. Leaders ensure that these pupils benefit from an appropriate curriculum which prepares them effectively for the next stage of their education.
- A high proportion of pupils move on to and stay in the courses of their choice, which provide next steps in education and training after leaving the school.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The sixth form is well led. It is growing in popularity with students, with a significantly greater number of applications for places for September 2019 than previously. The curriculum which is offered represents a good balance between academic and vocational courses. All courses lead to qualifications which are approved by the Department for Education
- Students attained good examination results across the range of courses which they studied in 2018. This examination success included those who joined the sixth form with strong GCSE grades and attained the highest A-level grades, and those students who are disadvantaged and receive a bursary to support their sixth-form education.
- Current students make good progress in their 16 to 19 study programmes. This is the case across the academic and the vocational courses which are offered. Leaders and teachers take the time to monitor the progress of every student. The action which they take when spotting that a student is falling behind is supportive and effective in helping them to catch up in their learning.
- The quality of teaching is consistently effective across a range of subjects. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to set work which captures students' interests and which challenges them to think deeply. As a result, pupils learn well.
- The proportion of students who repeat GCSE English and/or mathematics and improve their grade is above the national average.
- Almost all students remain for the full length of time required to complete their courses. They attend well, are punctual and the students with whom inspectors spoke had only positive things to say about all aspects of its provision.

- Checks made by inspectors found that safeguarding is effective in the sixth form. Students are well prepared for adulthood. They are supported well in managing risk and looking after their own welfare.
- Students benefit from the activities which leaders provide to broaden their study programmes. Leaders ensure that opportunities for students' personal development and work-related learning form an integral part of their curriculum experience. These aspects of the curriculum meet the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programmes and make a strong contribution to their wider development.
- Sixth-form leaders are effective in providing careers advice information, education and guidance to support students in moving on to aspirational destinations. Almost all move on to relevant courses or employment. For most recent students, this has meant higher education, including at Russell group and Oxbridge universities.

School details

Unique reference number	104962
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	10087810

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

Type of school	Secondary 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	836
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	110
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gus Van Cauwalaert
Headteacher	Matthew Symes
Telephone number	0151 924 6451
Website	http://www.holyfamilyhighschool.co.uk/
Email address	admin.holyfamilyhigh@schools.sefton.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 February 2017

Information about this school

- Holy Family Catholic High School is an average-sized school in Sefton.
- The school is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool.
- About a quarter of the pupils who completed Year 11 in 2017 joined during key stage 4, following the planned closure of another local school. For those who completed Year 11 in 2018, this proportion rose to one third.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is in line with the national average.

- The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is significantly below the national average.
- The school uses four alternative providers for a small number of pupils. These are Educ8, Everton Free School, Oakfield Pupil Referral Unit and Pinefield Centre.

Information about this inspection

- Meetings took place with school leaders, teachers, governors and a representative of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. A telephone conversation took place with the school improvement partner.
- Discussions were held with pupils from all year groups to gather their views on a variety of issues, including safeguarding, bullying, behaviour, teaching and the curriculum.
- Inspectors examined a range of the school's documentation, such as the self-evaluation and improvement plan, assessment information, the pupil premium plan, attendance, bullying and behaviour records, and safeguarding information.
- Inspectors took account of 42 staff survey responses, 117 responses to the pupils' survey, 116 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire Parent View, and 80 written responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text facility.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school and scrutinised pupils' work in a range of subjects and year groups. They were accompanied by school leaders on some of these observations.

Inspection team

Stephen Ruddy, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Bernard Robinson	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Holmes	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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