

Inspection of Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Engineering College

Glenburn Road, Skelmersdale, Lancashire WN8 6JW

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 June 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

For too long, pupils at this school have been let down by entrenched low expectations of what they can achieve. They have received an unacceptably poor standard of education, and improvements have not happened quickly enough.

Some groups of pupils have suffered the most. Disadvantaged pupils, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve far less well than their peers. Over time, leaders have not done enough to address the poor outcomes for these groups of pupils. Some of these pupils are very reluctant to attend school. Most leave school without attaining qualifications in English and mathematics that adequately prepare them for their next steps in education, employment or training.

Many pupils are happy at Our Lady Queen of Peace despite the poor education that they receive. Most feel safe. They value the care that leaders and staff provide. Leaders have recently raised their expectations of pupils' behaviour. They deal well with the incidents of bullying and discrimination that they know about. However, this has not given some pupils the confidence to report their negative experiences to staff. These pupils have come to accept the poor behaviour of some of their peers as the norm.

Leaders provide pupils with a suitable range of opportunities to develop their talents and wider interests. For example, some pupils look forward to performing in termly music and dance shows. Pupils who make use of these value them. However, many pupils do not participate in these opportunities.

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

Leaders, including governors, have overseen a stark decline in the quality of education at this school over many years. Inaction by governors has meant that poor leadership has gone unchallenged. For a long time, governors and leaders did not recognise the weaknesses in the school. Some still do not.

The recent appointment of several new leaders provides some hope. These leaders have an accurate view of what needs to be done. They are starting to take some positive action. However, the shortcomings at the school are wide-ranging and endemic. There is limited capacity to bring about the necessary improvements.

Work to improve the curriculum has been delayed by ineffective leadership. In some subjects, new leaders have begun to pave the way. They are starting to think more carefully about the essential knowledge that pupils must learn and the order in which it should be taught. However, other subjects are much further behind in their development. The curriculum that pupils experience in these subjects does not match the ambition of the national curriculum. To compound these weaknesses further, the subject content that teachers choose to deliver is often poorly matched to leaders' intended curriculum. This is because teachers have not had adequate

support and guidance from subject leaders. As a result, many teachers do not choose activities that will help pupils to build their knowledge successfully. Many pupils do not learn what they need to in these subjects.

A small number of disadvantaged pupils are currently denied the opportunity to study a broad range of subjects. Added to this, some of the most vulnerable pupils in key stage 3 are not taught by subject experts. This undermines the ambition for these pupils even further, making them even more likely to underachieve.

Leaders have not successfully established strategies to check how well pupils are learning the curriculum. The approaches that many teachers use are flawed. They do not allow teachers to identify and address pupils' misconceptions. As a result, teachers are unaware of the wide gaps in pupils' knowledge.

Leaders' systems for identifying the needs of pupils with SEND are poorly developed. They lack rigour. Often, pupils' individual plans do not identify their specific needs. This fails to provide staff with the information that they need to support these pupils effectively. Teachers do not know how to adapt the delivery of the curriculum to help these pupils succeed. Instead, they often lower their expectations for these pupils. As a result, many pupils with SEND receive a poor-quality education. Added to this, some have stopped attending school regularly. Others miss out on learning because they are too often suspended from school. Overall, pupils with SEND are not well prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training.

Leaders have started to identify pupils who are not reading as well as they should. Leaders are aware of the gaps that need to close. However, the scale of these gaps is vast. Leaders have not done enough to support those pupils who need the most help. Many pupils who struggle to read, especially those who will soon move into key stage 4, have not received adequate support to catch up. This places further barriers in the way of their achievement.

In recent months, leaders have begun to re-establish their expectations of pupils' conduct. Some pupils told inspectors that teachers are reinforcing these expectations more effectively than in the past. However, a small minority of pupils sometimes wilfully disrupt the learning of others. Some staff also feel that leaders do not sufficiently support them to address these incidents of poor behaviour.

Leaders have designed a comprehensive programme to support pupils' personal development. However, they have not ensured that this programme is delivered consistently well. As a result, some pupils miss out on important parts of their personal, social, health and economic education. Many pupils told inspectors that they know about healthy relationships and respect for others. Despite this, a small minority still experience unpleasant and discriminatory comments from their peers.

Pupils receive information about the careers and education opportunities that are available to them beyond secondary school. Some feel well supported in the decisions that they are starting to take about their next steps. However, the quality

of the advice and guidance that pupils receive is varied. Too many pupils lack the opportunity for meaningful engagement with the world of work.

Staff have varied views of how leaders support them. Teachers in some subjects told inspectors that leaders expect a lot of work from them. Other staff, including non-teaching staff, feel well supported. They recognise the efforts of recently appointed leaders to support their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have a keen understanding of the risks that pupils face in the local community. This has helped them to create suitable systems to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. Staff are well trained in these systems. They report any concerns promptly.

When staff raise concerns, leaders are quick to act. They work with a range of external agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils get the additional support that they need.

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum gives pupils age-appropriate information about staying safe. For example, pupils learn about consent and the dangers of drug and alcohol misuse.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Over time, members of the governing body have not had the knowledge or expertise to ask the right questions of leaders about the quality of education for pupils. This has prevented the governing body from providing a sufficient level of challenge to leaders. Those responsible for governance must ensure that they have the knowledge and information that they need to hold leaders to account rigorously for the quality of education for pupils.
- In some subjects, leaders have not identified what pupils should know. In some instances, and especially for disadvantaged pupils, the curriculum does not match the ambition of the national curriculum. This prevents pupils from learning all that they need in order to achieve well. Leaders should ensure that pupils receive a broad curriculum that equips them well for their future.
- Some subject leaders have not supported teachers, including non-specialists, sufficiently well to design learning, select appropriate pedagogies and deliver curriculums as leaders intend. This prevents some pupils from learning the curriculum as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that teachers receive appropriate guidance and support to deliver subject curriculums consistently well.

- Some teachers do not use assessment strategies well to check that pupils have learned and understood the intended curriculum. This hinders them in identifying and addressing the gaps in pupils' knowledge. Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment strategies to rectify pupils' misconceptions effectively.
- Some staff have low expectations of what pupils with SEND can achieve. Added to this, leaders have not ensured that there are effective systems to identify the additional needs of pupils with SEND and to ensure that this group of pupils benefit from appropriate support. This includes support for their attendance and behaviour. As a result, pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they should across the curriculum. Leaders must ensure that staff raise their expectations of what pupils with SEND can achieve and that teachers are suitably equipped to support this group of pupils to learn the curriculum well.
- A considerable proportion of pupils do not receive the support that they need to catch up in reading. This prevents these pupils from accessing the curriculum and achieving as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that those pupils who struggle the most with reading receive the support that they need from staff, ensuring that this support is effective in helping them to catch up quickly.
- Some staff do not apply leaders' systems to manage pupils' behaviour consistently well. This means that some pupils' lessons continue to be disrupted by the behaviour of a small proportion of their peers. Leaders should ensure that staff are supported well to manage pupils' behaviour in line with leaders' behaviour policies so that pupils can learn the intended curriculum.

Leaders and those responsible for governance may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' 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.

School details

Unique reference number	119782
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10286260
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	903
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Kath Gresty
Headteacher	Mary Henshaw
Website	www.olqp.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 and 15 January 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is part of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Liverpool. The most recent section 48 inspection of the school’s religious character took place in October 2018.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2022. A significant number of senior and middle leaders have also been appointed during the current academic year.
- Leaders make use of two registered alternative providers for a small number of pupils in full-time education. Leaders also make use of three unregistered alternative providers on a part-time basis.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and members of staff. The lead inspector also met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, geography, history and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils from Years 7 to 10 about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation document, leaders' improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority and with representatives of the archdiocese by telephone.
- Inspectors held meetings with the staff responsible for safeguarding and scrutinised the single central record. Inspectors considered leaders' safeguarding processes and procedures. Inspectors discussed matters relating to safeguarding with pupils, students and staff.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff, pupils and students.

Inspection team

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