

Inspection of St Cecilia's RC High School

Chapel Hill, Longridge, Preston, Lancashire PR3 2XA

Inspection dates:	7 and 8 January 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are polite, kind and considerate. They enjoy the positive relationships that they have with staff, who care for them well. Pupils make a strong contribution to the calm and respectful atmosphere that exists at the school. They are happy here.

Pupils respond well to the high expectations that the school has of their achievement and conduct. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully included in the life of the school. Pupils achieve well.

The school provides pupils with access to many activities that help them to develop their talents and interests. These include sports and art clubs, mindful crafts and the school's choir. Trips to places of interest help to deepen pupils' understanding of the subjects that they study. For example, pupils visit places of worship and they enjoy trips abroad. Pupils take part in outdoor and adventurous activities during residential stays. Visitors to the school help pupils to learn about other faiths and cultures.

Pupils make a positive contribution to their community. For example, they support food banks, raise money for charities and learn about the importance of fair trade. The broad range of activities on offer at the school helps pupils to become confident, resilient and independent young people.

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

Governors have a detailed understanding of the performance of the school. They provide appropriate support and challenge to assure themselves about the quality of education that pupils receive. Governors carry out their statutory duties effectively.

The school has designed an ambitious curriculum. It has thought carefully about the important information that pupils should learn. Staff appreciate the time that they have been given to develop their subject curriculums to include global issues. This has supported their workload. For example, in mathematics, pupils learn about poverty and inequalities through the study of international engineering projects. Most pupils are well prepared for each stage in their education. This includes further education, apprenticeships or employment with training.

Typically, staff use their subject knowledge to design activities that help pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding securely over time. Sometimes, however, the activities that staff create do not help pupils to build their knowledge sufficiently well. When this happens, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Staff make regular checks on what pupils know and remember. However, at times, staff do not promptly address the gaps and misconceptions that some pupils have in their learning. Consequently, some pupils move on to new learning before they are ready.

The school accurately identifies the additional needs of pupils with SEND. It provides staff with clear guidance about how to support these pupils effectively. Staff use this information well to ensure that these pupils can learn successfully alongside their peers.

The school identifies and addresses the reading needs of pupils with precision. For some pupils, this includes help to close any gaps that they may have in their phonics knowledge. The school provides pupils with the support that they need to become confident and fluent readers. The books that pupils read make a significant contribution to their understanding of the world. For example, pupils read books that help them to learn about justice, democracy, bereavement and how to recognise the features of a healthy relationship.

The school provides well-considered support to a small number of pupils that need help to manage their behaviour. These pupils respond well to this help. The school has successfully addressed the barriers that have prevented some pupils from attending regularly. This has reduced the number of pupils that are persistently absent from school.

The school's provision for pupils' personal development helps them to flourish. It prepares pupils exceptionally well for life in modern Britain. Pupils are taught about how to develop their emotional resilience. They know how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including online. The school's programme of careers education helps pupils to make informed decisions about their futures.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At times, staff design activities that do not help pupils to develop sufficient depth of knowledge in the subjects that they study. This prevents some pupils from achieving as well as they could. The school should ensure that it supports staff to design learning activities that prepare pupils well for each stage of their education.
- Sometimes, the school is not quick enough to rectify gaps and misconceptions in some pupils' knowledge. This means that these pupils move on to new learning before they are ready. The school should ensure that staff address pupils' misunderstandings in a timely manner so that pupils build their knowledge securely over time.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	119800
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10348213
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	581
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Michael Flynn
Headteacher	Helen Hall
Website	www.st-cecilias.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	15 and 16 October 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Diocese of Salford. The last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in December 2024. The next section 48 inspection will be in approximately five years' time.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school makes use of one alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth-form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- 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 carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, science, languages, history and design and technology. For each deep dive, they held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with subject leaders and looked at pupils' work in some other subjects.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. He also spoke with representatives from the diocese, the local authority and the school's improvement partner.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss SEND, reading, pupils' behaviour and attitudes and the provision for pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They took account of the responses from staff and pupils to Ofsted's online surveys and gathered the views of staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke to staff about their workload and well-being.

Inspection team

Andy Cunningham, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Paul Slater	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Parker	Ofsted Inspector

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