

Inspection of St Cuthbert's RC High School

Shaw Road, Thornham, Rochdale, Lancashire OL16 4RX

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where all pupils fit in and feel welcome, safe and happy. Pupils are knowledgeable about, and accepting of, each other's differences. They told inspectors that staff resolve any bullying incidents quickly.

Pupils benefit from an effective personal development curriculum. Pupils are well prepared to make the most of their lives in and beyond school. Many pupils enjoy the various clubs, activities and responsibilities that they are offered. These include sports, music, drama and puzzle clubs.

Leaders want the best for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged. Pupils' quality of education is improving. However, their achievement across subjects remains uneven. Some pupils, including some of those with SEND, do not achieve as well as they should.

Leaders set high expectations for how well pupils should behave. Pupils' behaviour is improving in classrooms and around school. Most pupils behave well. However, a minority of pupils continue to misbehave, especially at social times.

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

This is a school in a period of change. Senior leaders and governors have begun to address the weaknesses that have held back pupils' success in the past. Leaders are taking steps to provide pupils with a broad and high-quality education. Governors provide educational expertise and challenge to aid leaders in bringing about the necessary improvement.

The curriculum that many pupils experienced previously did not allow them to achieve well. Leaders have taken action to improve the breadth and depth of the curriculum. It is now more ambitious and meets pupils' needs and aspirations. Most subject curriculums are also organised effectively. Leaders make sure that the design of these curriculums includes the essential knowledge that pupils should learn.

Teachers are at different stages in ensuring that these new curriculums are delivered well. Some teachers carefully consider the most appropriate way to help pupils to learn key subject knowledge. They build pupils' learning in a logical order so that pupils gain a deep body of knowledge. This is not the case across the board. Some teachers do not ensure that pupils revisit their learning so that it is secure and easily recalled. As a result, pupils' achievement, including that of pupils with SEND, varies too much between subjects and classes.

Some teachers spot and address pupils' misconceptions well. They know when pupils have mastered essential knowledge. Teachers use this information to move on to new learning when pupils are ready. This means pupils remember more of their

learning. Elsewhere, teachers' checks of pupils' knowledge are less effective. Some teachers move on to new learning before pupils are secure in their earlier learning. When this happens, pupils fail to grasp some of the essential knowledge that they need.

Leaders make checks to identify any pupils who do not read as fluently as they should. Helping those pupils who need to master phonics is a high priority for leaders. The effective support that staff provide helps these pupils read well enough to access the subject curriculums.

Leaders' plans are underway to provide all pupils with regular time to read across subjects. However, these plans are at an early stage. Pupils' opportunities to practise and strengthen their reading knowledge vary from class to class.

Leaders identify the needs of pupils with SEND accurately. They provide staff with key information to support these pupils in their learning. Some staff use this information better than others to ensure that pupils with SEND achieve well.

Most pupils behave well. They are kind, polite and concentrate on their work in lessons. However, a minority of pupils do not behave as well as they should. They lose concentration in some lessons. Some pupils are boisterous between lessons and at social times. Some staff do not apply the school's behaviour policy clearly and consistently to moderate the behaviour of these pupils.

Leaders help pupils to learn beyond the academic curriculum. Pupils learn about social aspects, such as relationships. The careers education that staff provide informs pupils well about their options for further education, employment and training.

Staff told inspectors that leaders strive to ensure that they have a reasonable workload. Staff feel valued by leaders and enjoy working at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that staff know how to spot the signs that pupils may be at risk of harm. This includes any local and national risks that pupils may face. Staff are vigilant. They report any concerns that they have about pupils' safety and well-being. Such concerns are acted upon promptly by leaders.

Leaders have secured effective relationships with external agencies. They make sure that vulnerable pupils and their families get the timely help that they need. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, they learn how to stay safe when working online. Pupils know that they can seek help from staff when they need it.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some staff do not follow the school's behaviour policy. As a result, staff do not challenge the misbehaviour of a small number of pupils, either during lessons or at social times. Leaders should ensure that all staff apply the behaviour policy consistently well, so that pupils' learning continues uninterrupted.
- Some teachers do not deliver subject curriculums effectively. This means that some pupils, including some with SEND, do not secure and deepen their knowledge over time. Leaders should make sure that teachers are fully equipped to deliver their subject curriculums well so that pupils can build on their prior learning and develop a rich body of knowledge.
- Some teachers do not assess pupils' knowledge well enough. Consequently, some pupils, including some with SEND, move on to new learning before they are ready. These pupils have not secured the previous knowledge that they need to prepare them well for future learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment strategies effectively to check that pupils learn the intended curriculum as well as they should.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	105845
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	10216080
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	1127
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Conlon
Headteacher	Shaun Shields
Website	www.scrchs.com
Date of previous inspection	5 and 6 February 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Cuthbert's RC High School is a Roman Catholic school. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in March 2016.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at two registered external providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education and qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

- 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 held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders and subject leaders.

- The lead inspector met with a group of governors. This group included the chair of governors.
- The lead inspector met with a representative of the Diocese of Salford.
- The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's records of safeguarding checks and referrals to the local authority. Inspectors spoke with staff about how they keep pupils safe. Inspectors also asked the pupils how they learn how to keep themselves safe and what to do if they have any concerns.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff and considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors spoke with some pupils from all year groups and considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of the parents and carers who responded to Ofsted Parent View. This included free-text responses.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, geography, mathematics, physical education and science. 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 looked at curriculum documents and samples of pupils' work from some other subjects.

Inspection team

Stephen Ruddy, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Elizabeth Haddock	Ofsted Inspector
David Roberts	Ofsted Inspector
Phill Walmsley	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Cox	Ofsted Inspector

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