

St Cuthbert's RC High School

Shaw Road, Thornham, Rochdale, Lancashire OL16 4RX

Inspection dates

5–6 February 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Until very recently, leaders, including governors, had not been successful in improving either pupils' progress or the quality of teaching.
- Governors were unaware of the extent of the school's weaknesses and were therefore surprised by the poor results in 2018.
- Over time, pupils have not made the progress of which they are capable. For some years they have underachieved significantly in GCSE examinations.
- The spending of the pupil premium funding has not resulted in enough improvement in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
- Too much teaching is less than effective. The planning of learning does not take enough account of what pupils, especially the most able, already know and understand.
- In a small number of lessons, some pupils lose concentration and distract others. Some teachers are too slow to deal with this.
- Pupils' attendance remains below the national average. Too many pupils are regularly absent from school.
- A minority of pupils come to school with prejudicial attitudes related to race and sexual orientation. There is some use of derogatory language.
- Between lessons and at social times, some pupils are too boisterous and take little account of those around them.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has made significant changes which have begun to improve the school.
- Leaders and governors have used external review and support well in planning for improvements.
- Governors now monitor the impact of the actions of leaders more closely. They now know the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Effective training and good use of performance management have eradicated the weakest teaching. Some teaching in the school is inspirational.
- The curriculum is now more challenging, while continuing to allow individual choice and aspiration.
- In most lessons, pupils behave well and work hard.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - raising leaders' and teachers' expectations of pupils' academic achievement
 - ensuring that the spending of the pupil premium funding is more successful in improving the attainment of disadvantaged pupils
 - reviewing the effectiveness of strategies to increase pupils' attendance, particularly that of those who are persistently absent.
- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers make good use of assessment information to plan learning which takes account of pupils' prior attainment and capabilities
 - making sure that the tasks which teachers set are sufficiently challenging, especially for the most able
 - ensuring that teachers do not tolerate low-level disruption in lessons.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - reviewing how the school promotes its well-documented vision and values in relation to respect for differences in race and sexual orientation
 - making sure that all staff follow the school's policies and procedures in relation to the use of prejudicial and derogatory language
 - raising the expectations of staff and pupils with regard to behaviour between lessons and at social times.

A review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding 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

- For too long, the actions of leaders, including governors, did not lead to school improvement. As a result, too much teaching remained ineffective and pupils made less progress than their peers across the country who had achieved similar results at the end of Year 6.
- Since taking up his post in 2018, the new headteacher has made significant changes. The positive impact of these changes can already be seen in most aspects of the school.
- This academic year, in planning for improvement, leaders and governors sought and welcomed support from the Diocese of Salford, the local authority and other schools. The resultant reviews provided a very good baseline from which leaders developed effective plans to address identified weaknesses.
- Senior, pastoral and subject leaders, as well as governors, are aware of the school's strengths and are honest and open about what must still be improved across the whole school and in their own areas of responsibility.
- A combination of the effective use of performance management and a wide-ranging training and coaching programme has eradicated the weakest teaching. The monitoring of teaching is now frequent and rigorous. The strongest teachers act as models for those who need to improve. Nevertheless, too much teaching is still ineffective in ensuring that pupils achieve their full academic potential.
- Current plans for the use of the pupil premium funding are now more precise than previously. Strategies are more closely linked to the specific barriers to learning which disadvantaged pupils face. New posts have been created which ensure that some staff time is entirely dedicated to working with this group. However, these plans are at an early stage of development and disadvantaged pupils still underachieve significantly in relation to their non-disadvantaged peers.
- Funding to help pupils who arrive in Year 7 with low levels of literacy and numeracy has been used effectively. Extra staffing and resources have enabled intensive and targeted work with small groups and individuals. Most pupils within these groups are well on the way to catching up with their peers by the end of the year.
- The leadership of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is very strong. The new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) took up post in September. She has used her experience in special schools and a recent local authority review to enhance the quality of education and care provided for pupils with SEND.
- The school's vision and values are prominently promoted in displays, policies and curriculum statements. The equality policy firmly declares that St Cuthbert's will not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation in relation to race or sexual orientation. Most pupils are strong advocates of this unequivocal statement.
- Despite leaders' promotion of the school's vision and values, a small number of pupils come to school with negative attitudes towards people of different races from their own and with different sexual orientation from their own. Some pupils use derogatory

and prejudicial language which makes some of their peers feel uncomfortable and excluded. Pupils told inspectors that there have been occasions when some teachers have not followed the school's procedures in relation to racist and homophobic name-calling.

- At the request of some pupils, this year, leaders created a pupils' equality group. This group has been instrumental in organising two whole-school equality days, which will take place in April this year.
- There have been significant changes to the school's curriculum. As a result, the number of pupils studying the suite of subjects which make up the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) has increased from 9% to 85%. Leaders have ensured that pupils can still choose from a wide range of other subjects which match their interests and ambitions.
- Despite inspection evidence that a small number of pupils do not always show respect for difference, it is clear that leaders take care to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including cultural visits. In general, pupils have a good understanding of British values and can clearly articulate the link between these and the Catholic ethos of the school.
- Pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) is addressed in assemblies, form time and at special events. As there is limited time allocated to these areas, some themes are not addressed in sufficient depth.
- The school has a well-organised careers information, education, advice and guidance programme. As pupils move up the school, teachers and an impartial external provider help them to choose appropriate subjects, careers and education beyond Year 11.

Governance of the school

- Until recently, governors had not held the school's leaders to account effectively for the deterioration in standards and the quality of teaching. They did not challenge with sufficient rigour the information which the school's leaders gave them.
- After the 2018 examination results, governors took stock and set up stronger systems by which they now monitor all aspects of the school. They now have a very accurate and detailed understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Recent minutes of governors' meetings show clearly that they ask leaders challenging questions about teaching and pupils' progress and insist on hard evidence of improvements.
- Governors bring a wide range of educational, managerial and financial skills to their roles. They have dedicated considerable time to their own training and development and to supporting the school.
- The governing body takes its statutory responsibilities very seriously and ensures that safeguarding and welfare arrangements meet requirements fully.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that pupils feel safe and are safe.

- All staff and governors understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- Policies and procedures are up to date and match the latest requirements.
- Referrals to external agencies and to the local authority are appropriate and well recorded.
- Staff know which procedures to follow if they have concerns. They have undertaken recent and regular training in all relevant aspects of keeping children safe.
- Pupils and staff are aware of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. Leaders have used referral systems well to assure themselves of pupils' safety in this respect.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Too much teaching fails to promote strong achievement because leaders' and teachers' expectations of how much academic progress pupils are capable of making are not sufficiently high.
- Most teachers do not use assessment information well enough to plan learning which takes into account what pupils have already achieved. This is particularly true in relation to the most able pupils, who continue to make the least progress of all the ability groups in the school.
- The school's assessment and tracking systems have recently been amended to match the higher expectations of the new national curriculum and the latest examination specifications. However, the work which staff are undertaking to review long-term planning is still under way. Consequently, some current schemes of work are not sufficiently challenging.
- Improved monitoring of pupils' progress has resulted in earlier identification of pupils who are falling behind. As a consequence, teachers are now able to address weaknesses in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding more swiftly.
- In most lessons, pupils have good attitudes to learning. Most teachers insist that they listen carefully, follow instructions and work hard. However, pupils told inspectors that a minority of teachers have lower expectations of behaviour. In some lessons, learning is disrupted by a small number of pupils who talk when the teacher is talking and try to distract others. Inspectors saw a small amount of behaviour which matched what pupils described.
- In the school, there are teachers who are models of the very best practice, including well-established staff in modern foreign languages and drama. These teachers are infectiously enthusiastic, have the highest expectations of work and behaviour and inspire the highest endeavour. In addition, lead practitioners in English and mathematics recently took up post. Alongside support in English, mathematics and religious education from specialist leaders of education from other schools, these teachers increase the school's capacity to sustain and build on recent improvements in the quality of teaching.
- For the most part, teachers generate very positive relationships with pupils. They frequently use praise and humour and devise activities which make learning enjoyable.

- The vast majority of teachers are subject specialists with strong knowledge. However, some do not use this knowledge well enough to frame challenging questions which extend pupils' understanding.
- The use of homework to extend learning varies across subjects and teachers. Some parents and carers, and some pupils, feel that there is too little homework. The new online homework system provides more opportunities for parents to check what has been set and for leaders to monitor its effectiveness.
- The use of other subjects to help pupils to improve their literacy and numeracy is at an early stage of development. Recently, a member of staff has been given responsibility for this area.
- Parents' evenings and school reports give parents accurate and useful information about how their children are progressing.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development requires improvement.
- A minority of pupils do not show respect for pupils who are different from themselves. These pupils do not take account of the impact of thoughtless racist and homophobic name-calling on the feelings and self-esteem of their peers. The views of one pupil typified those expressed by the majority: 'It's the same few people and they probably don't realise that what they say makes me feel uncomfortable.'
- Leaders have developed a well-devised programme for PSHE. Nevertheless, lack of allocated time means that teachers cannot address some areas in sufficient depth. Pupils do not have sufficient understanding of topics such as healthy eating.
- Pupils have considerable opportunity to undertake leadership roles such as older 'buddies' helping younger ones who are struggling with work or confidence.
- Teachers have ensured that pupils know how to keep themselves safe from physical and emotional harm. They make sure that pupils understand the dangers of extremism and of using the internet and social media.
- The school's records and the views expressed by pupils indicate that, despite name-calling, bullying is rare and that, when it occurs, staff deal with it effectively.
- Those parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire had confidence in how the school promotes the personal development and welfare of their children.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Between lessons and at social times, a minority of pupils do not take enough account of those around them, particularly on crowded staircases. There is too much thoughtless shouting and pushing, which makes some younger and more vulnerable pupils feel a little intimidated.

- In lessons, most pupils behave well and are keen to learn. A small minority occasionally lose concentration and try to distract others.
- Attendance remains below the national average. Too many pupils are regularly absent from school and miss important learning. Despite a slight improvement, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils remains below that of non-disadvantaged pupils in the school and across the country.
- This year, higher expectations of punctuality have resulted in a considerable decrease in the number of pupils who arrive late at school.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- For at least two years, across eight subjects at GCSE, pupils made considerably less progress than pupils nationally with similar results at the end of Year 6. The progress of disadvantaged pupils was particularly weak in comparison with that of other pupils nationally with similar starting points.
- This year, improved teaching and better assessment and tracking, as well as earlier support for those who are falling behind, have ensured that pupils currently in the school are making better progress than has previously been the case.
- Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work and of the school's assessment information indicates that teachers' assessments are accurate and that expectations of what pupils should achieve by the end of each school year are beginning to rise.
- Although the disadvantaged pupils currently in the school are achieving more than in the past, they are still far from catching up with their non-disadvantaged peers.
- Pupils of middle and lower ability are now achieving more than in previous years. However, the most able pupils continue to underachieve when account is taken of their results at the end of primary school.
- As a result of effective leadership and teaching, pupils with SEND make good progress.
- Teachers' very high expectations of work and attitudes to learning in modern foreign languages continue to ensure that pupils make considerably more progress than is seen nationally.
- The school has prioritised the development of reading. Pupils of all abilities enjoy reading and do it with a confidence and accuracy that reflects their ability.
- A well-devised programme of support ensures that those pupils in Year 7 who need to catch up in English and mathematics are quickly gaining the literacy and numeracy skills needed to succeed across the full range of subjects that they study.
- The proportion of pupils who are still in education, employment or training two terms after leaving the school is a little above the national average.

School details

Unique reference number	105845
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	10086856

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 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,005
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Frank Gac
Headteacher	Shaun Shields
Telephone number	01706 647761
Website	www.scrchs.com
Email address	headteacher@scrchs.com
Date of previous inspection	5 November 2018

Information about this school

- St Cuthbert's RC High is larger than the average secondary school.
- The number of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is above average.
- The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support for SEND is small in comparison with the national figure.
- The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is lower than the national average.
- The local authority and Diocese of Salford support the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited classrooms to observe teaching and pupils' learning. Many of these lesson observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors observed and spoke to many pupils during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors met formally with four groups of pupils. An inspector heard a range of pupils read.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff, middle and senior leaders, members of the governing body, an officer of the local authority and a representative of the Diocese of Salford.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including arrangements for safeguarding. They took account of the school's information about pupils' outcomes and scrutinised pupils' books and assessment information.
- Inspectors considered 45 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including a number of free-text comments. They also considered 52 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff. In addition, they scrutinised responses to the school's questionnaires for parents and pupils. No pupils responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.

Inspection team

Liz Kelly, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
David Hampson	Ofsted Inspector
Annette Patterson	Ofsted Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Ofsted Inspector

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Manchester
M1 2WD

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