

Inspection of a good school: St Mary's Catholic High School

Royal Avenue, Leyland, Lancashire PR25 1BS

Inspection dates:

21–22 January 2020

Outcome

St Mary's Catholic High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils describe their school as 'welcoming' and they would recommend it to a friend. They say that they feel safe in school because they know that staff will listen to them if they have a problem. Pupils say that bullying is rare. They appreciate the work of pupils in Year 9 who act as 'anti-bullying ambassadors'. Pupils told us that staff will sort out any incidents of bullying quickly.

Pupils are confident that any poor behaviour will be dealt with by staff. Corridors and social spaces are mostly calm. Pupils told us that the systems staff use to deal with pupils' behaviour work well. For the most part, pupils listen attentively during lessons and they follow teachers' instructions. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve.

Many pupils are keen to give their time to good causes locally. For example, younger pupils told us how much they had enjoyed making tea and cakes for those people in the community who have dementia. Pupils in the 'kindness club' told us that they had made cards and sang for elderly residents of a local nursing home.

Pupils value the wide range of clubs on offer, such as football, robotics, netball, rugby, art, dance, table tennis, chaplaincy and chess. Older pupils value the opportunity to work towards the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

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

Leaders have created a caring ethos where pupils are keen to learn. Pupils achieve well in many of their GCSE examinations. In subjects where pupils have not achieved as well in the past, leaders have already acted to improve how well the curriculum is planned and delivered.

Many subject leaders have designed key stage 3 curriculums that match the challenge of the national curriculum. For example, this is the case in history, geography, computing, physical education (PE) and Spanish. However, although pupils achieve well in English,

some pupils do not study a broad enough range of ambitious texts in key stage 3. This prevents them from gaining a deep enough understanding of this subject.

Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects. They design appropriate activities and provide clear explanations for pupils. Teachers ensure that pupils can remember the knowledge that is the most important. For instance, in history, pupils revisit important facts about the Norman Conquest. Teachers use assessment well to identify and address pupils' misconceptions. For instance, in geography, teachers check that pupils understand the difference between the short- and long-term effects of earthquakes.

Most subject leaders have organised demanding curriculums well. This means that pupils can build successfully on earlier learning. For example, in Spanish, pupils in Year 7 use their knowledge of verbs to complete more difficult tasks. That said, some subject leaders have not considered carefully enough the order in which key stage 3 topics are delivered. Senior leaders have already taken steps to ensure that key stage 3 curriculums are planned logically in many subjects. This is especially the case in geography, history and Spanish.

Leaders are working to ensure that teachers adapt the curriculum well for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND benefit from extra support. Many teachers deliver and adapt the curriculum well for this group of pupils. That said, a small number of teachers do not adapt the curriculum successfully for pupils with SEND.

Pupils behave well in lessons, and they enjoy school. This is reflected in their high rates of attendance. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND also attend regularly. They embrace the many opportunities on offer beyond the classroom.

Pupils develop an understanding of different religions such as Islam, Hinduism and Judaism. Pupils' charitable work in the local community supports their social development well. Pupils learn about the importance of tolerance and respect for each other. They say they can be open about their sexual orientation and their gender identity at school. Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain. Through the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum, pupils learn about relationships and sex education. A well-designed careers programme means that almost all pupils move on to further education, employment or training.

Staff are proud to be part of such a warm school community. They say that senior leaders manage the school well, and they appreciate leaders' actions to reduce workload. Staff say that leaders consider their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have thorough systems in place to check that staff are safe to work with pupils. Staff receive regular training about safeguarding. They understand the procedures to

follow if they have concerns about a pupil. Staff have an up-to-date knowledge about potential safeguarding risks that are relevant to the local area.

Pupils learn about how to stay safe. For example, they learn about the dangers of fireworks and swimming in open water. They also learn about the negative effects of alcohol and drugs misuse. Parents and carers can benefit from voluntary sessions to learn about important safeguarding issues. For example, staff keep them informed about how to help their children stay safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In English, some pupils in key stage 3 do not study a broad enough range of ambitious texts. This prevents some younger pupils from developing a wide-ranging knowledge of this subject. Leaders should design the English curriculum so that all pupils in key stage 3 can acquire a deep understanding of this subject.
- In some subjects, leaders have not considered carefully enough the order in which key stage 3 topics are delivered. This means that some pupils do not have the most important knowledge they need for future learning. Leaders should design subject curriculums so that younger pupils can build successfully on earlier learning. Leaders have taken positive steps to tackle this already. It is for this reason that the transition arrangements have been applied to determine that the quality of education remains good.
- Some teachers do not adapt the curriculum effectively enough for pupils with SEND. This means that pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they should in some subjects. Leaders must ensure that all teachers use information about pupils with SEND to adapt more carefully how the curriculum is planned and delivered.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 21–22 June 2016.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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	119816
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10122057
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	694
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Gill Donohoe
Headteacher	Phil Thompson
Website	http://lsmchs.com/
Date of previous inspection	21–22 June 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher was appointed in September 2018.
- This school is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The school's last section 48 inspection took place on 28 June 2016.
- The school uses alternative provision for a small number of pupils at Shaftesbury High School; The Heights; Preston's College and Myerscough College.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, we spoke formally with pupils, teachers, support staff, subject leaders and senior leaders. I spoke with a representative from the local authority and four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I also spoke on the telephone with a representative from the Archdiocese of Liverpool and a representative from one of the alternative providers used by the school.
- We reviewed a broad range of documentation about safeguarding, including the school's record of checks on newly appointed staff.
- We considered school documents, including subject leaders' curriculum plans. We checked on leaders' information regarding pupils' attendance and behaviour.

- We considered the 175 responses to a questionnaire for pupils and the 52 responses to a questionnaire for staff. We also checked on the views expressed by parents in the 82 responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Parent View, including comments received via the free-text facility.
- This inspection focused deeply on geography, mathematics and English. We spoke with pupils, teachers and subject leaders. We visited lessons and examined pupils’ work. Other subjects were considered as part of the inspection, including science, computing, history, PE and Spanish.

Inspection team

Emma Gregory, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

David Roberts

Ofsted Inspector

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