

Inspection of a good school: St Edmund Arrowsmith Catholic High School, Ashton-in-Makerfield

Rookery Avenue, Ashton-in-Makerfield, Wigan, Lancashire WN4 9PF

Inspection dates:

16 and 17 November 2021

Outcome

St Edmund Arrowsmith Catholic High School, Ashton-in-Makerfield, continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at St Edmund Arrowsmith Catholic High School. They feel safe and well looked after. Pupils enjoy good relationships with each other and staff. They said that their teachers set high standards for pupils' behaviour and achievement.

Pupils feel valued and respected. They are proud of what they achieve. Staff recognise and celebrate pupils' academic and personal achievements.

Pupils behave well. Their conduct in lessons is extremely good. They have positive attitudes to their learning. Pupils are calm and sensible when moving around school. They are polite and look after their school environment. Pupils rarely experience poor behaviour in lessons or around school.

Pupils told inspectors that bullying and other unkind behaviours are extremely rare. They said that pupils look after each other well. Pupils believe that there are many staff they can approach for support if they need it. They are confident in how staff deal with any incidents of bullying.

Pupils are enjoying the re-emergence of wider opportunities, such as subject clubs, sports, music, dance and drama, now that the COVID-19 restrictions have eased. Pupils also value the additional opportunities that they get to develop their character through various leadership roles. They particularly appreciate the student council, and mentoring and prefect roles that they can get involved in at the school.

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

Governors, leaders and staff at St Edmund Arrowsmith continually reflect, learn and improve. Since the previous inspection, they have collaborated well to further strengthen

leadership and the quality of education that pupils receive. They carefully nurture a culture where pupils strive to behave well in lessons and around school.

Leaders have designed the curriculum to meet pupils' specific needs. Pupils of all ages have access to an appropriately broad and balanced curriculum. The vast majority of pupils achieve well. They are well prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of how well the curriculum is delivered and the difference that it makes to pupils' achievement. They make intelligent, short-term use of external support to strengthen the planning and delivery of subjects where necessary. Consequently, subject leaders are increasingly confident and knowledgeable about their subjects.

Subject curriculums are appropriately aspirational for all pupils. They ensure that suitable subject content is delivered in a sensible order. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Most teachers use this to present subject matter clearly. Teachers often provide pupils with suitably demanding activities. Teachers use assessment effectively. They have a clear understanding of what pupils can do. Most pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), know and remember more in the subjects they are studying.

Most subject plans clearly set out the important knowledge that pupils should learn. Many teachers carefully consider how they deliver and assess the knowledge that pupils are learning. Consequently, pupils gain a deep understanding of these subjects. In a few subjects, planning is not as well developed. In these subjects, teachers' delivery and assessment of important knowledge is less focused. At times, this stops pupils from gaining new knowledge as securely as leaders intend.

Leaders diagnose pupils' reading needs effectively. They ensure that pupils who are at the earliest stages of learning to read are appropriately supported. Typically, these pupils successfully strengthen their phonics, fluency and comprehension knowledge. These pupils access content in the subjects that they are studying with increasing confidence.

Leaders carefully identify the needs of pupils with SEND. They share good-quality information to help staff support these pupils effectively in lessons. Leaders ensure that pupils are securely equipped to overcome their specific learning, emotional or physical needs.

Leaders provide a well-planned personal development curriculum that is tailored to the needs of pupils. Pupils regularly explore themes, including risk, citizenship, health and relationships. They benefit from an equally well-structured careers education, information, advice and guidance programme. Staff ensure that pupils get access to high-quality independent information. Pupils spoke highly of the personal development and careers education that they receive. They said these help them make important choices about their futures. Pupils show respect to adults and to their peers. They behave well during their time in the school building.

Leaders provide a genuine 'open door' policy for staff. The vast majority of staff said that leaders are approachable. They feel that leaders are always ready to support them as individuals when they need it. Leaders collectively support staff well. Staff particularly value the 'staff well-being group' where leaders and staff collaborate about what they can do to support the welfare of staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils are regularly taught about risks and how to avoid them. Staff ensure that pupils have up-to-date and relevant knowledge about how to keep themselves safe.

Leaders ensure that staff are well equipped to identify pupils who need support. Staff record and report concerns about pupils carefully. Leaders make effective use of this information to quickly identify what they can do to support pupils.

Staff provide a suitable range of appropriate support for pupils who need it. They communicate effectively with external partners and parents and carers to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, plans do not set out the important component knowledge that pupils will learn. In these subjects, some teachers do not match activities to the intended learning as well as they should. Additionally, some teachers do not use assessment to identify the knowledge that pupils have learned. As a result, some pupils in these subjects do not make the same gains in what they know and remember as they do elsewhere. Leaders should ensure that all subject plans are clear about the specific knowledge that pupils will learn. They should provide teachers with the support that they need to ensure that their choice of pedagogy and assessment helps pupils to gain this key knowledge.

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 or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2012.

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	106540
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	10204450
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	1207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Stephen Westhead
Headteacher	Mark Dumican
Website	www.arrowsmith.wigan.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Edmund Arrowsmith Catholic High School is a voluntary aided Catholic school. It is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The school's last section 48 inspection took place in March 2017.
- The school makes use of two alternative providers to provide part-time education for a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior leaders. They met with representatives from the governing body, the Archdiocese of Liverpool, and Wigan local authority.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's records of safeguarding checks and referrals. They met with leaders who have overall responsibility for safeguarding. Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils about the school's work to keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders responsible for SEND and reading. They also looked at information about the support for pupils who have additional needs.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in class and around the school site. They also scrutinised behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils from all year groups and considered the responses of pupils who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff and considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including the comments received by Ofsted's free-text facility.

Inspection team

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