

St Matthew's RC High School

Nuthurst Road, Moston, Manchester, M40 0EW

Inspection dates

26-27 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students' achievement is good. The progress of all groups has improved year-on-year since 2009 and their attainment in both English and mathematics in 2012 was the highest in the school's history. Students' progress and attainment in the wide variety of vocational subjects on offer are also impressive; in 2012, for example, all students reached pass standard or above in all the subjects for which they were entered.
- As a result of an overriding emphasis placed by leaders, managers and the governing body on improving the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom, teaching is now good and there are many examples of outstanding teaching in several subjects and in both key stages. This is just one example of the marked improvements made by the school since the previous inspection.
- Students are proud of their school, behave well and feel safe. They have a high regard for the adults who work with them. In their words, 'The staff always go the extra mile to help us.' Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. For example, students benefit from the many responsibilities they have and older pupils work closely with their younger counterparts, helping them with reading, for example. In addition, the radio station, run by students, is a joy to hear.
- Leadership and management are outstanding and the foresight of the senior team has empowered staff at all levels of responsibility to lead significant improvements in their specific areas. In addition, the governing body has a perceptive understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Members hold the school's leadership to account with exceptional rigour.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although showing sustained improvement over time, achievement is not outstanding. Achievement in mathematics is good but is not quite as strong as achievement in several other subjects. Pupils' calculation skills, for example, are relatively underdeveloped.
- The quality of teaching is good overall but, on occasions, teachers direct learning too much and pupils do not always take enough ownership of their own progress. Outstanding elements of teaching are not shared widely enough across all subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 43 lessons or part-lessons, of which two were joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. In addition, they heard students in Key Stage 3 read.
- Meetings were held with five groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body, heads of academic departments, pastoral leaders, administrative staff and members of the senior leadership team. They also held telephone discussions with a representative of the local authority and the School Improvement Partner.
- Inspectors took account of the 21 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and also of the 43 returns from the staff questionnaire.
- They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including internal and external student progress and attainment data, students' workbooks, school development planning, minutes of governing body meetings, local authority reports and the school's self-evaluation form. They also considered documentation in relation to performance management, professional development activities, attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.

Inspection team

James Kidd, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Pamela Hemphill	Additional inspector
Gary Kelly	Additional inspector
Catherine Laing	Additional inspector
Keith Worrall	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school and it has slightly more girls than boys.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- There is a just-above-average proportion of students supported at school action but a below average percentage on school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- Over four fifths of students are White British but there is an increasing percentage of students from minority ethnic heritages; few students speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- St Matthew's holds specialist status in technology, has Artsmark, the International School award and is a nationally-accredited Healthy School. It is also part of the Teaching School Alliance, led by another Catholic high school in a neighbouring authority. The school provides strong support, in French, for example, for its partner primary schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate students' progress and attainment in mathematics further by:
 - improving students' mental and written calculation skills
 - enhancing students' ability to apply their mathematical skills effectively when solving problems.
- Ensure teaching moves from good to outstanding by:
 - reducing the amount of teacher-talk in lessons, thus ensuring that students take even more responsibility for their own learning
 - fully embedding strategies and practice which promote students' numeracy, speaking and listening skills across the curriculum more effectively
 - providing wider opportunities for teachers to share the outstanding classroom practice already evident across the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of students

is good

- Students' attainment on entry to the school varies from year to year but is generally broadly as expected. Both progress and attainment at the end of Year 11 have improved strongly each year since 2009 and students' achievement is now good. The GCSE examination results in 2012 were the best in the school's history and standards were above average. Results in both English and mathematics were the highest ever recorded but, as a result of a legacy of staffing issues in the subject, the percentage of students reaching A* to C in mathematics was slightly behind that reached in English.
- Although good and improving, students' achievement in mathematics is not quite as strong as that in English. Nonetheless, over a third of students in the current Year 11 cohort have already attained a C grade or above in mathematics; inspection evidence, including lesson observations and the scrutiny of students' work, demonstrates that students are on course to reach even higher standards in the subject at the end of this current academic year. However, students' calculation skills, both mental and when they are completing work on paper, are not as good as they should be. In addition, some students still find it difficult to apply the discrete mathematical skills they have learned when they are completing problem-solving assignments.
- The school is rightly proud of its vocational programme, which comprises a wide range of subjects including construction, health and social care, media studies, drama, business studies and information and communication technology (ICT). Students opt for these programmes in large numbers and achieve well year-on-year.
- Students' skills in both reading and writing are improving apace. Students interviewed report they read widely, enjoy visiting the school library and that the school does all it can to encourage them to read.
- Sharpened assessment practice to identify when students are experiencing difficulty leads to disabled students and those with special educational needs also achieving well. They receive customised support from talented teaching assistants and from the school's overriding ethos that everyone should benefit from everything it has to offer. Similarly, as a result of staff and members of the governing body placing great emphasis on the impact of the school's work to support students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, these students also achieve as well as their peers and the gap is closing. Moreover, the increasing numbers of students from minority ethnic heritages are fully included in all activities and their progress is, therefore, in line with that of their classmates.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Secure subject-knowledge, perceptive use of ICT to promote learning and effective classroom management are just three of the key strengths of teaching across the school. Teaching is good overall and, during the inspection, outstanding teaching was seen in a quarter of the lessons observed. The quality of teaching has improved markedly since the previous inspection, as a result of strong emphasis placed by senior leaders on providing accurate feedback, both oral and written, to teachers on how they can enhance their performance in the classroom. As yet, however, the outstanding practice evident in a range of subject areas and in both key stages is not shared widely enough across the school.
- Relationships in the classroom, between students and between students and the adults who work with them, are strong: students speak highly of their teachers and believe they have their best interests at heart. They value the opportunities they have to work collaboratively and, therefore, to support each other in their learning. They are delighted when their classmates succeed, for example in a most impressive Year 10 mathematics lesson when students congratulated one of their number when he completed a complex equation accurately on the board.

- Where teaching is outstanding, in a Year 9 drama lesson, for example, there are high levels of challenge, rapid pace of learning and students assess their own performance. Students can explain how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve their work. Similarly, where teaching promotes exceptional progress, for example during an excellent Year 11 science lesson, students are fully engaged in their learning, use subject-specific vocabulary accurately and rise to the high expectations their teachers have of them.
- On occasions, however, students do not take enough responsibility for their own learning and progress because there is too much teacher talk and explanation and, therefore, not enough time for students to reflect on how well they are doing and to find things out for themselves. Furthermore, in a minority of lessons across the curriculum, strategies and activities to promote and reinforce students' numeracy, speaking and listening skills are not fully embedded.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' behaviour overall is good and is underpinned by warm relationships and a positive attitude to learning. Indeed, on occasions students' engagement in lessons is outstanding. Students are polite and respectful to each other and to the adults who work with them. Their social and moral development is promoted well by the thought-provoking house assemblies, when, for example, they consider the importance of mutual respect. There are some instances of low-level misbehaviour but these are handled effectively by the school.
- Links with schools in France, Germany and China are valued by students and these, along with the wide range of well-attended extra-curricular activities, serve to foster their spiritual, cultural and multicultural awareness. As part of their GCSE and vocational studies in music, students impressively compose their own pieces based on world influences, Gamelan music from Indonesia, for example.
- The radio station is an important part of school life and students produce weekly shows, which include music, jingles and interviews. Students responsible for running the station comment, 'Involvement helps us to become more self-confident and means that we can socialise with other year groups and also learn about technical aspects of radio.'
- Students in all years are proactive in their support for others. As prefects, 'guardian angels', mentors and form captains, they work with other students to ensure all can take full advantage of what the school has to offer. Older students help younger students with their reading and, through the highly-regarded vertical tutor group system, students in all years get on well with each other.
- Students demonstrate an untypically perceptive view of the dangers of bullying. As a result of the work of 'anti-bullying ambassadors', they are well aware of the many different kinds of bullying, including bullying based on prejudice. They comment that bullying is a rarity in school and that if it does occur, it is tackled quickly and effectively. They, therefore, feel safe in school and are grateful for the information they receive on how they can stay secure, the widely publicised internet-safety programme, for example.
- The school undertakes a detailed ongoing analysis of the attendance of different groups of students. The impact of this work has been positive and attendance, which is now broadly average, has improved over a three-year period.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- In the words of the staff, 'The work of the senior leadership team continues to ensure that teachers are growing in confidence, take responsibility for their own performance and for performance in their subject areas. We are a team here.' Indeed, the exceptional senior team leads by example and has the welfare of all, students and staff, at its heart.
- As a consequence of the emphasis placed on improving the quality of teaching, staff receive detailed feedback following lesson observations, full support to improve their practice and then focused observations to gauge whether performance has improved. Performance

management arrangements are secure, targets lead to a wide range of opportunities for professional development and teachers are fully aware of the inextricable link between the quality of teaching and students' achievement, both academically and personally.

- At all levels, leadership and management are outstanding and have led to the excellent improvements since the previous inspection. Pastoral leaders are ever concerned to promote the self-esteem of their students and they also have a secure understanding of the academic progress their charges are making. Heads of department take full responsibility for improving performance in their subjects and they benefit from joint observations undertaken with senior staff. Teachers are of the view that the quality of oral and written feedback they receive following lesson observations has improved significantly since the previous inspection.
 - Subject departments have close links with members of the senior leadership team and each subject has a mentor. Much of the professional development is undertaken in-house and staff welcome the establishment of the five school improvement groups, the membership of which comprises senior leaders, heads of house, heads of department and other staff, including newly qualified teachers. The remit for the groups varies from 'climate for learning' to 'literacy across the curriculum'.
 - The curriculum is continuously under review and the school places great emphasis on providing activities which meet the needs, interests and aspirations of all. The vocational curriculum is a particular strength and there is a wide variety of programmes, often interlinked with academic courses.
 - Safeguarding and child-protection procedures and practice are fully in place and meet current requirements. Without doubt, St Matthew's is a school in which pupils come first: it therefore promotes equality of opportunity and good relationships most effectively. There is zero tolerance towards all forms of discrimination.
 - The local authority provides strong support for the school. For example, it continues to fund the appointment of a School Improvement Partner.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - exceptionally well led by the Chair, members of the governing body have a most secure understanding of school performance in all areas of its life; they are actively involved, for example, in gauging the impact of the school's work to support students known to be eligible for the pupil premium
 - members support the school to the hilt, but also challenge the leadership and hold it to account with the utmost rigour.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105577
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	405001

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1126
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr Alan Denny
Headteacher	Kevin Hogan
Date of previous school inspection	16 February 2011
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