

Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College

Highfield Road, Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 7DW

Inspection dates

5–6 December 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement requires improvement. This is because students have not been making good progress in mathematics and science.
- The gap between the attainment and achievement of students who are eligible for free school meals and other students in the school is wider than that seen nationally.
- Teaching is improving rapidly but it is still not consistently good enough across all subjects. This has been holding back students' progress in some subjects, particularly in mathematics and science.
- Teachers do not always plan lessons that are well-matched to the needs, abilities and interests of learners. This means that in certain lessons the work is too difficult for some students and for others it is too easy.
- Marking is of variable quality. Students do not always receive helpful information on how to improve their work.

The school has the following strengths

- School leaders are united in their passionate ambition to turn the school around and improve teaching and achievement. They have a very clear grasp of what needs to be done to make this a good school.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- Behaviour is good. Students are friendly and polite. They are proud of their school.
- The sixth form is good. Effective leadership, good teaching and an appropriate range of courses are leading to rapid improvements in students' achievement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 35 lessons, of which three were joint observations with members of the leadership team. An inspector also listened to small groups of students read.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff, groups of students and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 22 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspection team observed the school's work and considered a range of information provided by the school regarding, for example, students' achievement and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Records relating to attendance and behaviour, the school development plan, information on the quality of teaching and the setting of targets for teachers were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Joan Bonenfant, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Clive Moss	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paul Rafferty	Additional Inspector
Denah Jones	Additional Inspector
Jonathan Woodyatt	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized secondary school with a sixth form.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is greater than the national average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, children of parents in the armed forces, and for students known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is well below average, as is the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is greater than that found nationally. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly below average.
- The school has recently established specialist provision for students on the autistic spectrum.
- A number of students attend work-related training away from school.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A new headteacher was appointed in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve further the quality of teaching overall and particularly in science and mathematics, by:
 - making sure existing good practice across the school is shared more effectively
 - ensuring teachers in all subjects mark work regularly and thoroughly, so that students have clear advice on how to improve their work
 - checking that all teachers plan interesting lessons that are carefully matched to the needs and abilities of students, so that all students receive appropriate support and challenge.
- Raise achievement in mathematics by making sure all subjects contribute to improving students' numeracy skills.
- Take swift action to make sure that the gap between the progress made by students who are eligible for free school meals and other students in the school narrows quickly by:
 - checking that the funds available for the pupil premium have a direct and positive impact on improving the progress of these students
 - identifying the barriers that are standing in the way of these students making better progress and taking swift action to remove such barriers.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In 2010, the proportion of students achieving five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, at GCSE was significantly below average. Standards have risen sharply since then. As a result, in 2012 the proportion of students achieving five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, was broadly average.
- Students join the school with above average attainment in English and mathematics. Since the previous inspection, there has been a concerted and successful drive to improve standards in English. As a consequence, most groups of students make at least good progress in this subject.
- School leaders have also shown a determination to improve standards in mathematics but staffing difficulties have presented a challenge. The proportion of students making expected progress in mathematics has increased from 2011, but in 2012 it was still below the national average.
- Inspection evidence shows, however, that things are getting better. Teaching in mathematics is now stable and new leadership of the subject is moving the department forward at a faster pace. As a result, students, particularly in Key Stage 3, are making better progress and students in Key Stage 4 are on track to meet their targets at the end of Year 11.
- Students' performance varies across subjects. Students do well in design technology, art and English. This is not the case in science, where large groups of students underachieved in 2012. The school has introduced one-to-one tuition and provided extra staffing to help students who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium. However, these students do not always make the progress they should, particularly in mathematics. There is a larger than average gap in the overall performance of these students in comparison with the performance of other students in the school.
- Literacy is promoted across many subjects. Students who enter the school with weak reading and writing skills receive effective support and, as a result, their literacy skills improve. However, procedures to promote numeracy through different subjects are underdeveloped.
- Students with a statement of special educational needs or with disabilities generally make reasonable progress, given their starting points. Effective support is provided for students who need extra help including those who benefit from the specialist provision. A small number of students who attend work-related training at places away from school achieve well overall. As a result most students go on to further study or employment when they leave school.
- Strong leadership and good teaching in the sixth form are combining to help students achieve well from their starting points. School leaders have introduced a wider range of courses that are better suited to students. This has already led to marked improvements in students' progress.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is improving rapidly. Good practice exists in many subjects across the school and teaching in well over half the lessons observed during the inspection was good or better. The pockets of mediocre teaching which led to some underachievement in mathematics are beginning to disappear.
- The school recognises that there remain some pockets of weaker teaching in science and has taken swift action to address this, and is in the process of tackling underperformance in this subject. In the best lessons, a range of interesting activities stimulate students. Teachers have high expectations and ask probing questions to check that students have understood the work. They also make lessons relevant to the outside world. For example, in one Year 9 English lesson, students were encouraged to reflect on the nature of war by studying a poem by Wilfred Owen.
- On occasions, activities are not challenging enough and students lose interest. In addition, students do not always receive enough support and the work is too difficult for them. This can hold back their learning.
- Occasionally, activities lack imagination and do not give students enough opportunity to work

independently or to be creative. Some marking gives students clear advice on how to improve their work. This good practice is not consistent across the school and marking is not always as helpful as it should be. As a result students are sometimes not sure what they need to do to reach higher standards.

- Teachers set challenging targets for their students. They identify when students are falling behind and offer additional support. This support is now becoming more effective than it used to be, particularly in relation to improving achievement in mathematics and for students known to be eligible for the pupil premium. Teachers are good role models for their students. They conduct themselves in a professional manner and mutual respect abounds.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. Students are polite and show pride in their school. There is a clear system for managing poor behaviour and this is widely understood by students. As a result the school is an orderly, harmonious and welcoming community.
- A majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire feel that behaviour is good in the school and that their children are well looked after. Students say that bullying sometimes happens, but that the school staff step in to sort it out. Students enjoy coming to school and say that they feel safe.
- Students say that the use of racist or homophobic language is rare. If it does occur, it is challenged and dealt with successfully by staff. The school makes sure individuals feel valued and supported; as one student commented, 'Everyone is kind – they would help anyone and everyone fits in!'
- Attendance is slightly above average. Students are punctual to school and, for the most part, to lessons.
- The school provides support and advice to students regarding the safe practices they should adopt, both inside and outside of school. As a consequence, students feel confident that they can speak to staff if they have a problem in their lives.

The leadership and management are good

- After the previous inspection, major changes were made at leadership level. The deputy headteacher and the leader of teaching and learning formed a dynamic and highly effective team. As a consequence, teaching and students' achievement are now beginning to improve.
- The new headteacher is supported by a strong leadership team, who share her ambition and determination to drive further improvement. The school now has a more accurate view of its strengths and areas for development. The school has learned from its mistakes and is now much more rigorous in its approach to rooting out underperformance.
- Through the programme to improve teaching, individuals get support that is tailored to their particular needs but are also challenged to make sure that achievement improves. As a result there is greater ambition amongst staff to teach lessons that are of a consistently good quality.
- The school has been successful in addressing some of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Improvements in standards, the sixth form and in English all demonstrate that the school has the capacity to improve further.
- Across the school students can choose from a wide range of subjects. The sixth-form curriculum has improved markedly and students now follow courses that are well-matched to their interests, abilities and styles of learning. This is leading directly to improving students' achievement.
- There is a wide range of exciting after-school activities on offer. Students can expand their cultural knowledge through visits to the theatre, art galleries and trips abroad. Students' spiritual and moral development is encouraged through thought-provoking assemblies and chances to discuss ethical issues in lessons.
- The decision by school leaders to enter students early for GCSE examinations in mathematics has helped to motivate some students and the school encouraged students to re-sit the

examination if they did not achieve their target grade.

- Students are encouraged to look after each other and are taught to challenge racism and discrimination of all kinds. The school recognises gaps in achievement between groups of students. Actions to tackle such inequality are at the early stage of development and so it is too early to judge their impact. Safeguarding and child-protection arrangements meet current requirements.
- School leaders have built up useful partnerships with local agencies. For example, links with businesses are helping students to find employment when they leave school. The school has received intensive and effective support from the local authority to raise standards.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is astute and committed to school improvement. Governors have a clear grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors and senior leaders use information about students' progress and the quality of teaching to decide whether teachers should be paid more. Governors have not allowed pay increases to teachers who have not met their targets. They are much more confident now in holding the school to account. They are well-informed and use this information to set challenging targets for further improvement. They have a good understanding of the systems in place to check the quality of teachers' work. Governors have managed finances effectively. They have made sure that funds available for the pupil premium have been spent wisely, such as on additional staffing. Governors are aware of the gap between the achievement of some students compared to others and continue to challenge the leadership team to address this.

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	111457
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	401184

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1580
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	154
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	J Wilson
Headteacher	Wendy White
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2010
Telephone number	0151 4242139
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