

St Margaret Ward Catholic College

Little Chell Lane, Tunstall, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST6 6LZ

Inspection dates 6–7 February 2013

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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students make good progress and achieve well. Attainment in English and mathematics has been significantly above average for three years.
- Students with a wide range of needs achieve well. Students known to be entitled to receive free school meals make the same equally good progress as other students.
- Teaching is good with an increasing proportion that is outstanding. It has improved markedly since the previous inspection. Most lessons are interesting, creative and enjoyable.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance is consistently above average.
- The care and support provided by the school is outstanding. As a result, nearly all students feel safe and have a very clear awareness of how to keep safe, including rules for internet safety.
- The sixth form is good. Achievement is improving at A and AS level and the attainment of students currently compares favourably with national figures.
- Senior leaders have created a demanding but supportive climate in school. Staff morale is high and all staff respond positively to the high expectations set for their work.
- On the basis of thorough and regular reviews, members of the governing body, the headteacher and senior leaders and managers know exactly what they need to do to improve the school further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Changes to the science curriculum have improved outcomes for lower- and middle-attaining students. However, students studying triple science have no more time than those studying double science so that fewer students are reaching the highest grades.
- In order to secure the improvements seen in the sixth form over the last three years, the school needs to embed the recent structural changes.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 50 lessons taught by 50 teachers.
- Discussions were held with groups of students, members of staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at work in students' books and studied information about how well the students are making progress. They reviewed safeguarding documentation and systems, school policies and records of the school's actions.
- Inspectors took account of the 62 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and the views of parents who contacted the inspection provider.

Inspection team

Judith Straw, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Christine Addison	Additional Inspector
Robin Fugill	Additional Inspector
Elizabeth Haddock	Additional Inspector
Mick Blaylock	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a slightly larger than average-sized secondary school with a smaller than average sixth form.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is smaller than average, as is the number who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportions of disabled students and those supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs and at school action are just below the national average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, additional funding provided for certain students, is just below national figures. In this school this applies to students known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority.
- A very small number of students attend courses at Stoke-on-Trent College and The Reach College.
- The school has specialist status for the arts and holds a number of awards in recognition of its work. These include Artsmark gold, Healthy school status, International school, Fair Trade, Eco School and the Stoke Olympic charter.
- The school is a member of the Newman Catholic Collegiate, which is a federation with eight local Catholic primary schools.
- In September 2012 the school became part of a sixth-form consortium in partnership with three other secondary schools. Together they have created The Trinity Sixth Form College.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- Since the previous inspection a new deputy headteacher took up post in January this year and the senior leadership team has been restructured.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the achievement of students by:
 - consolidating recent gains in the quality of learning and progress of students in the sixth form
 - streamlining and embedding the leadership and management of the sixth form
 - reviewing the lesson allocation for students studying three single sciences to make sure these students are able to reach the highest grades.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students typically enter the school with average attainment. By the end of Year 11 standards in English and mathematics are well above average and have been so for the last three years. Achievement is good across a wide range of subjects.
- Students make rapid progress and the number making good progress is higher than in many other schools. However, fewer students than average achieve the highest grades in single science subjects.
- Work in students' books and the progress seen in lessons confirms that students in all year groups are achieving well.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make the same good progress because of the sensitive and effective support they receive from class teachers and teaching assistants.
- The attainment and progress of students known to be entitled to receive free school meals is strongly improving so that the gap between their average points score at GCSE and other students is moving closer each year.
- A very small number of students attend local colleges. These students achieve well because their attendance and progress is carefully checked and the courses suit their needs and abilities.
- Progress in the sixth form has been slower to improve than in the rest of the school. However, achievement is now good because standards have risen consistently for the last three years and now compare favourably with national figures. Issues relating to the attainment of students at AS level have been addressed by more frequent reporting on progress and better mentoring of students so that progress is good.
- Students work hard and are interested and keen to improve and refine their work. Students sometimes show exceptional resilience in taking the initiative in solving problems and in supporting and helping each other. Their high aspirations and willingness to work hard prepare them well for the next stage of education or employment.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good across the school and on the way to becoming outstanding. Outstanding lessons were seen in all key stages and across a range of subjects including English, religious education, French, art, science, history, information and communication technology and mathematics.
- Teachers use their assessment of students' previous work to plan lessons with the right level of challenge to individuals and groups. For example, in mathematics, a brief mental test at the beginning was used by students to guide them to the most appropriate task in that lesson.
- Teachers create positive relationships in the classroom resulting in students responding enthusiastically, confidently and without fear of embarrassment or failure.
- Good support is given to disabled students and those who have special educational needs by effective planning for their learning from class teachers and additional well judged support from teaching assistants. The aim is that students should experience success, develop self-esteem and become independent learners.
- Where teaching is outstanding students are able to research and investigate for themselves so that they develop deep thinking skills while sometimes being adventurous and creative. Teachers encourage independence and group work to explore topics extensively.
- Literacy is promoted strongly. Teachers introduce key words and regularly challenge students to define the meaning. As a result, students are able to produce high quality written work using accurate, specialist vocabulary.

- Marking is good and provides all students with important information about their progress. Assessment is frequent and is regularly updated to indicate achievement over time. It is common in lessons to hear teachers linking recent work to grades and for students to understand exactly what they need to do to reach the next level.
- In the very small number of lessons where teaching is less strong it is because learning is limited when tasks do not have the right level of challenge. Just occasionally, enthusiasm is such that the classroom becomes too boisterous and, although not undisciplined, not all students are able to thrive in their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students in lessons is often exemplary. Students show exceptional independence, initiative in solving problems and frequently become absorbed in their learning.
- Students typically feel safe at school and are well aware of different kinds of bullying relating to race, gender or sexual orientation and say that it is very rare and always dealt with effectively by the school. They are particularly well informed about rules for internet safety and the use of social-media websites. Students ably led an assembly about the importance of internet safety during the inspection.
- Students believe that behaviour has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Many say that they approve of the stricter uniform rules and feel that they are making good progress as a result of good teaching, a useful homework club and school mentors whom they say, 'have a huge impact on us'. Scrutiny of behavioural records confirms this improving position.
- The vast majority of parents responding to Parent View agreed that behaviour is well managed.
- The significant amount of building work which has been going on for months has posed particular challenges for student movement around the school. Students have coped with this well.
- Attendance is consistently above average. The school has a good strategy to help students whose attendance gives cause for concern. The attendance of the very small number of students who attend alternative provision is monitored daily.
- The school provides excellent support for students whose circumstance might make them vulnerable. For example, a family support worker helps families and students facing particular difficulties.

The leadership and management are good

- Excellent leadership and management from the headteacher with good support from the senior leadership team and the governing body have led to significant improvements in teaching, the curriculum and the achievement of students over the last three years.
- Leaders and managers at all levels are involved in improving the school. Teachers have set up their own working group to improve teaching. Teachers know they are accountable for the progress students make in their care and the school offers very effective support for any teachers experiencing difficulties. This is one reason why staff turnover is so low. Weekly meetings review the progress of the few students educated in alternative provision. The school takes reasonable steps to ensure that students are safe off-site.
- The headteacher has sharpened performance-management procedures so that pay is linked to teaching, management performance and raising standards.
- The leadership of the sixth form is shared between the headteacher, an assistant headteacher and the director of the Trinity Sixth Form. This structure is in its infancy due to the very recent opening of the Trinity Sixth Form. The school rightly intends to review and streamline this process.

- The curriculum has many strengths. Year 7 students follow a creative curriculum for 10 lessons each week which combines key skills, a focus on problem-solving and independent learning and helps students to look at subjects from a different angle. For example, a Year 7 group were considering the different functions of the human brain; another group were grappling with the idea of how they might represent an image of the soul. The specialist arts status is used to good effect.
- The school offers a range of courses in Key Stage 4 to suit different levels of ability. One weakness is that sometimes students are not allocated enough timetabled lessons, particularly those studying three single sciences, to achieve the best results.
- A small number of students are entered early for mathematics in order to give them the opportunity to re-sit the examination if they are unsuccessful. The highest-attaining students take the GCSE examination at the end of Year 11 to maximise their opportunity of reaching the highest grades.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students continues to be a major strength of the school. The values and beliefs of the school are evident in lessons where students are willing to reflect meaningfully on their learning. The school teaches a clear moral code. Students have a good awareness of other cultures through trips, visits and personal experience. They show respect for diversity.
- Safeguarding and child-protection arrangements fully meet requirements.
- The vast majority of parents are pleased with this over-subscribed school. The inspection team investigated two queries raised by individual parents but found no cause for concern.
- The local authority has provided only light touch support for this rapidly improving school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very well informed about what is happening in school through direct personal contact. Every member of the senior leadership team meets regularly with a link governor. Governors are fully involved in the checking of the quality of teaching and the progress students make. They are well aware of systems of performance management and know how good teaching is rewarded and how underperformance is tackled. They understand how well the school is doing in comparison to others and are ambitious for further improvement. Governors check that pupil-premium funding is used to successfully reduce the gap in the performance of different students. Governors undertake regular training.

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	124460
Local authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	402260

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	1,105
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	105
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Thompson
Headteacher	Chris Smith
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2009
Telephone number	01782 234477
Fax number	01782 234483
Email address	smwadmin@sgfl.org.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

