

Blessed John Henry Newman RC College

Broadway, Chadderton, Oldham, Greater Manchester, OL9 9QY

Inspection dates

12–13 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Students up to the age of 16 underachieve, especially in Years 7 and 8. Younger students do not achieve well in many subjects at Key Stage 3.
- Progress is too slow. There have been improvements; the school forecasts more but gains are not firmly rooted or widespread. Students' progress in mathematics has improved but in other subjects, such as English and humanities, it remains too slow.
- Students lack confidence and skills in literacy which holds back their progress in other subjects. In lessons, support for students' literacy is patchy, including for improving their speaking skills.
- Marking is weak, especially in Years 7 and 8, and students are unclear how to improve.
- Too much teaching requires improvement or is inadequate, especially at Key Stage 3. In too many lessons, activities lack clear purpose, do not capture students' interest, or are too easy.
- Where teaching is not good, there is low-level disruptive behaviour. Students stop working, switch off or talk to friends over the teacher.
- Leaders check teaching regularly but have concentrated too much on what teachers do rather than on what students learn as a result. Consequently, the school's view of the quality of teaching is too generous.
- Governors have focused on the many demands of opening a new school but have taken too much on trust about the quality of teaching.

The school has the following strengths

- In the sixth form, students make good progress because they are taught well and courses suit their needs and interests.
- There are clear signs that new systems are starting to raise standards, such as in mathematics.
- The school works very well with agencies for the care of vulnerable young people.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have worked hard to manage the creation of a new school. They have overcome setbacks very well, to unite two different schools into one community with shared values and vision.
- The behaviour of young people around the new building is usually calm and well-ordered. Students feel safe at school and say that help is available if they have problems.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 44 lessons including four jointly with senior leaders. They saw registration periods and looked at how students behaved out of lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior and subject leaders, and members of the governing body. They met with representatives of the diocese and of a partner school giving support, and talked with a representative of the local authority.
- Discussions were held with groups of students in all years about their educational experience and behaviour. Samples of students' written work were considered and younger students were heard reading.
- Inspectors looked at documents including the school's self-evaluation, development planning, tracking of students' progress, monitoring of teaching, performance management, staff training, and minutes of governing body meetings. They looked at records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- The inspection took account of 49 responses to the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View), the school's own parental surveys, and three letters from individual parents.
- Inspectors considered 38 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Barbara Comiskey, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Leszek Iwaskow	Her Majesty's Inspector
Christine Addison	Additional Inspector
Steven Goldsmith	Additional Inspector
Kathleen Yates	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- Blessed John Henry Newman Roman Catholic College opened as a new school in September 2011. However, students and teachers worked on the separate sites of two former schools while waiting for completion of the new building. The school moved onto one site in autumn 2012.
- The former schools differed in size, age range, composition and ethnicity and served communities with different backgrounds. The current school is larger than the average secondary school, with a very small sixth form. Just over a third of students, more than average, are from minority ethnic backgrounds. One in four students speaks English as an additional language; few are at an early stage of learning it.
- One in three students is known to be eligible for the pupil premium (a grant for schools to boost the progress of those known to be eligible for free school meals, in local authority care, or with a parent in the armed forces). This proportion is higher than average.
- The proportion of disabled students or those with special educational needs supported by school action is above average while the percentage at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is lower than average.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard for students' achievements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning, so that all lessons are good or better, by:
 - ensuring that activities in lessons capture students' interest, especially in Years 7 and 8, so that they are keen to learn and there is less low-level disruption;
 - enabling teachers to model, demonstrate and illustrate what they wish students to achieve in lessons in more specific and practical ways;
 - helping teachers to improve their skills, particularly in asking questions in lessons, stating the purpose of activities to pupils clearly, and marking and feedback so students know how to improve.
- Raise standards in all subjects, particularly in English and the humanities at Key Stage 3, by:
 - improving support for individual students who need extra help with reading and writing;
 - implementing plans for improving literacy skills for all students in all subjects;
 - teaching students how to write for a wider range of purposes and to extend their writing;
 - giving higher-level, more demanding work to more-able students.
- Improve the effectiveness of the school's leaders to carry out more accurate self-assessment, by providing opportunities for leaders and teachers to observe outstanding lessons in a range of other schools, and identify what can be learned for practices in school.
- Increase the capacity of the governing body to hold the school to account more rigorously. An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Achievement is inadequate because standards across a wide range of academic subjects are too low, including in English and humanities.
- In examination classes, progress has begun to speed up, especially in mathematics. There are early signs of a wider upward trend. However, improvements are not consistent across all subjects. Recent progress in English is below the national average.
- Students in Years 7 and 8 do not make enough progress in many subjects. The work set is too easy or dull so students often switch off and do not learn enough. The work of younger students is not monitored and marked as rigorously as that in examination classes.
- In 2012, the proportion of students gaining five good GCSE passes (including English and mathematics) was much lower than the national average.
- Examination results have been boosted by success in non-GCSE vocational courses that suit the needs of lower and middle-attaining students.
- Students who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to other students in school. Disabled students and those with special educational needs make better progress and achieve in line with similar groups nationally.
- Students' average point scores show that the gap between the attainment of students entitled to free school meals and all other students is smaller than average, but this is because the achievement of students overall is too low.
- The pupil premium is being targeted well to improve students' skills in numeracy and literacy, and to provide revision classes, one to one support and social skills training where students lack confidence. However, the targeted provision for literacy does not reach all who need it. Literacy interventions out of class are not followed up by subject teachers.
- More able students are not being stretched. In 2012, too few gained A* and A grades at GCSE.
- The school enters students early for GCSEs in mathematics and religious education. School leaders ensure that students have the opportunity to improve their grades in Year 11.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good: students make good progress. They join courses with below-average results but when they leave, results are comparable with national averages. Teachers use their subject experience and knowledge to good effect. Courses are well suited to students' interests and aspirations.
- Teachers develop students' mathematical skills well in a number of subjects, such as in physical education and in vocational learning. However, students' limited literacy skills are a barrier to learning and improvement. Some younger students can read with fluency but others struggle to read subject textbooks or other learning material in lessons, such as wall posters in science.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate because students do not make enough progress in lessons over time, and in a wide range of subjects. Progress speeds up in examination classes but is weak in Key Stage 3 where too much work repeats what students already know and can do. The same level of work is given to everyone, which some find too easy. Too many lessons lack momentum.
- In weak lessons observed across a range of subjects, including humanities and English, students were not given the chance to finish the work that the teacher had set. Links between one task and the next were not clear and students could not explain the purpose of their work.
- In weak lessons, activities are fragmented and lack depth. For example, in an English lesson, students were part-way through a task when music was played. They enjoyed it, but it interrupted rather than advanced their learning. In humanities subjects particularly, teachers do not enable students to develop enough subject-specific knowledge.
- In the best lessons, for instance in drama, food studies, vocational and BTEC courses, teachers

expect students to work independently. They use a range of resources and real life examples that capture the interest of learners. In a good Year 9 drama lesson, well-chosen visual illustrations using the internet were labelled with accurate technical language. Students could explain the links, use the vocabulary and see the relevance to the masks they were making.

- In a good mathematics lesson, the teacher spotted that most of the class had misunderstood a step in calculating the area of triangles. On the electronic whiteboard, the teacher used large coloured triangles for an effective demonstration so that students overcame the problem. He asked students to explain how they reached their answers and so deepened understanding.
- Disabled students, those with special educational needs, those who speak English as an additional language or are entitled to support through the pupil premium make progress in lessons similar to that of their peers.
- Support staff contribute to managing behaviour and learning, sometimes very well, as when a teaching assistant used high level mathematical skills to work with individual students who were experiencing difficulties.
- Assessment and marking are not carried out well enough at Key Stage 3. Teachers do not comment regularly or specifically enough on how each student could improve his or her work and too much work is incomplete. For examination classes in most subjects, marking is more detailed and regular, based on examination criteria.
- In the Parent View online survey, a substantial minority of parents said they would like more clarity about homework. There is a school policy which includes use of the virtual learning environment. Senior leaders are in the process of clarifying the policy for parents.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- Behaviour requires improvement because when lessons do not engage students, they switch off from learning, chat over the teacher, and do not complete tasks. Students said that they find it hard to concentrate when there is low-level disruption. When teaching is good, students respond enthusiastically, behave well and show pride in their work.
- Behaviour around the school, in corridors and at lunch time, is good. There is a calm, positive atmosphere. Most students behave sensibly and attend regularly.
- Most students are punctual but in a minority of lessons observed, small groups were late. Lesson openings were interrupted. Teachers do not always check when students are late to classes.
- In the online survey (Parent View) 80% of parents felt that their children are safe at the school but almost half thought behaviour needs to improve. The school meets regularly with groups of parents to explore issues of interest or concern. The school has responded well to issues raised, such as making staff a more visible presence at the end of the school day.
- Students say they feel safe in the school; there is always someone to talk to about a problem. There is little bullying and few racist incidents. If problems do occur, they are handled appropriately. Students are aware of different types of bullying and are aware of how to protect themselves, such as against cyber-bullying. Students find the family group tutorial system to be supportive.
- Attendance is just below the national average. The persistent absence of small numbers of students from minority ethnic heritages has been resolved.
- The school works to good effect with a range of agencies that support vulnerable young people. Children at the school, who are looked after by the local authority, receive good care and make sound progress, given their starting points.
- The number of exclusions has gone down. There are effective strategies to manage and improve the behaviour of individual students.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because, although leaders show capacity to move the school forward, the impact on standards is as yet limited to some subjects and aspects of the school. Actions are at too early a stage for the full effects to be felt.
 - Senior leaders and governors have had a challenging year in which two schools closed and a new one opened. With the support of senior staff and governors, the headteacher has managed the formation of one school with a common identity very successfully. He has communicated his vision well so that the school now has ambitious aspirations.
 - Whole school policies and approaches have been established for assessment and feedback to students, tracking students' progress, whole school literacy, and behaviour. Some policies are starting to have good effects. For example, extra support for a small group of students with the poorest reading skills has improved their reading ages. Many students have benefitted from improvements in mathematics teaching. However, such improvements are not yet reaching enough students and are not in place across all subjects.
 - Senior and middle leaders of subjects observe lessons regularly but have been too generous in their evaluation of the quality of teaching. This is because they have paid too little attention to students' learning and progress in lessons. There are examples of improvements to teaching but they are not widespread across the school.
 - More recent monitoring and evaluation are sharper and identify problems more accurately. This shows growing capacity at both senior and middle levels to make improvements based on sound diagnosis. Middle leaders vary in the extent to which they are driving forward the necessary improvements.
 - The range of subjects and courses offered by the school meets the needs of most students, promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, and provides equality of opportunity. At age 16, almost all students stay on into education and training. Sixth form BTEC vocational courses are well-suited to the talents and aspirations of the students following them.
 - Parents are generally supportive of the school. The school has effective strategies for engaging with parents. About a quarter of staff responded to the staff questionnaire during the inspection; most are supportive of the school's aims and leadership.
 - The local authority gave intensive and sustained support for the school to move to one site. It has since kept a broad overview of progress. Support is good in quality but limited in scope.
 - The school meets legal requirements for safeguarding of students.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors care deeply about the school and are ambitious for its future. They have played a key part in helping ethnically diverse students, parents and communities to form one school. They are committed to meeting the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged young people. Governors are well informed about the pupil premium and its impact on narrowing achievement gaps for those known to be eligible for free school meals. However, the targets that have been set to show the impact of the pupil premium support on students' achievement are not challenging enough.
 - Some aspects of the management of teachers' performance are robust: a number of teachers have been turned down for pay progression where targets were not met. However, much of the improvement that the governing body thinks is taking place relies on the school's over-optimistic monitoring of teaching. Governors have taken too much on trust in this important area.
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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	136432
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	400275

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	1,441
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	46
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Canon Eugene Dolan
Headteacher	Michael McGhee
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0161 785 8858
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