

# Our Lady's RC High School

Alworth Road, Higher Blackley, Manchester, M9 0RP

## Inspection dates

30 April 2013 – 1 May 2013

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Some students do not make fast enough progress, especially in mathematics so their overall achievement is not as good as it should be.
- Groups of students that make slower progress than others in mathematics include girls, some students who have special educational needs and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Teaching is not good enough to secure good progress for all students. In some lessons, students have to spend too much time listening to teachers and work is not always exactly at the right level for each student.
- Students do not have enough opportunities to think for themselves in lessons or to do work that stretches them enough.
- The efforts of leaders at all levels, including governors, to tackle underachievement in mathematics have been too slow.

### The school has the following strengths

- The school is a very happy place where students behave well, develop a strong sense of right and wrong and take responsibility for others.
- The number of exclusions has fallen significantly since the previous inspection.
- Students who are eligible for free school meals achieve better in English than other students in the school, because of the high-quality care that the school provides for them.
- There have been some improvements in students' achievement in science.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 31 lessons, of which three were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised students' work during lessons and looked at a sample of their written work over time in English, mathematics and science.
- Meetings were held with three groups of students, the Chair and representative members of the Governing Body as well as members of staff, including senior leaders and leaders in charge of subjects and other aspects of the school's work. A telephone discussion was held with a local authority representative.
- Inspectors took account of the 16 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire, the staff questionnaire and students' views about the school.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including information on students' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Susan Wareing, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Fiona Burke-Jackson	Additional Inspector
Keith Massett	Additional Inspector
Mark Shenton	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Our Lady's RC High School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, additional funding allocated for students known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after by the local authority or members of service families, is well above average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The needs of these students relate mainly to behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and specific learning difficulties.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is higher than that found nationally. A broadly average percentage of students are believed to speak a home language other than English.
- There are slightly more boys than girls.
- The school arranges full- or part-time placements away from school for a very small number of students, mainly in Years 10 and 11, for example at Manchester College or Bethel College or on a training course organised by Manchester City in the Community.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school has held specialist status in sport and information and communication technology (ICT) since 2003.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by ensuring that:
  - teachers plan work that is better matched to students' learning needs
  - all students have more opportunities to think for themselves and are fully challenged to achieve as well as they can.
- Leaders and managers should take urgent action to ensure that the proportions of students who make and exceed expected progress in mathematics are at least in line with national averages.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Students' achievement requires improvement because they do not make as much progress as they could in all their subjects, especially in mathematics.
- Students enter the school with standards that are significantly below the national average. By the time they leave school, their overall standards on most, but not all measures, are broadly in line with those found nationally. Students' progress in English is above average.
- Those who are supported by the pupil premium achieve particularly well. The pupil premium in 2011/2012 provided, for example, mentors in English and mathematics, a family worker and a summer school. In English, the performance of those who received this support rose by 10% more than that of their peers, to significantly above average. However, the gap did not narrow significantly in mathematics.
- That a very small number of students attending the alternative provision, many of whom have the most complex learning difficulties, are encouraged by this provision to continue in full-time education and to enter GCSE examinations.
- Progress overall in mathematics, especially for students of middle and higher ability and for some of those who have special educational needs, has been significantly below average for the last two years. Mathematics was an area for improvement in the previous inspection. Senior leaders have made staffing changes that have led to some improvement, which the school's information shows is set to continue, but levels of progress remain significantly below the national average. Progress in science was also an area for improvement and is now better, because the school has introduced more appropriate science courses that give students a better chance of a GCSE qualification.
- Art and design and physical education were strong subjects in the GCSE examinations in 2012. Communication studies, French, religious education and statistics were weaker and performance in humanities and other subjects was broadly in line with national averages.
- The progress of both boys and girls in mathematics is significantly below average.
- The school is reviewing its policy for early GCSE entry in English and mathematics because some students lose the drive to work towards the higher grades once they have secured a pass at grade C.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, the efforts of senior leaders to improve the quality of teaching have resulted in some improvements in teaching. No inadequate teaching was seen during the inspection and inspectors saw a few examples of outstanding teaching.
- Overall, too much teaching requires improvement because it is not consistently strong enough to make sure that all students progress as well as they can in all their subjects, especially in mathematics.
- Lessons that require improvement are hampered by teachers setting work that is either too easy or too hard. For example, most students do the same tasks, whatever their ability, so do not make enough progress. Teachers talk too much and their questions are sometimes too simple to maintain students' interest or to make them think more deeply about their learning.
- In the lessons where teaching is good or outstanding, teachers' planning takes account of students' starting points and draws on what they have already learned and on their own ideas, helping them to make links with other topics and subjects and come up with their own conclusions. This involves all students actively in their learning. There is plenty of scope for students to share their learning with others and extend it through tasks that are more complex rather than merely longer. The pace of activities is appropriately brisk; teachers' skilled questioning rapidly clears students' misconceptions and leads to visible progress.

- Marking is regular and conscientious. Most teachers make good use of information from the school's robust systems for checking students' progress. Most students therefore know how well they are doing and how to improve their work. In weaker lessons observed, teachers did not always check whether students had acted on feedback given.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Students are very proud of their school. They behave well in lessons and around the school; they are courteous and welcoming to visitors. Relationships in lessons are very positive and older students say that the new behaviour policy has improved behaviour during their time in school.
- The school's very strong moral, social and spiritual ethos permeates everything that it does and contributes much to students' sense of right and wrong. Students show great responsibility towards others and the wider community.
- Students say that they feel very safe in and around the school. They appreciate the high-quality care and support provided by a wide range of staff, including on their way to school. They know how to protect themselves, for example from internet and other forms of bullying and discriminatory behaviour and language. Almost no parents and carers who completed the online questionnaire on Parent View expressed concerns about behaviour. Students report that it is easy to make friends at the school, because they all respect one another and get on well together, including those who have disabilities or special educational needs, or who are from different ethnic backgrounds. One student's comment is typical of many and reflects the impact of the school's commitment to equalities: 'There can't be any "them and us" because we are nearly all of mixed backgrounds in some way.'
- Exclusions have reduced dramatically over the last two years, because the school offers a wide range of approaches to help students who find it difficult to settle into school. Attendance was an area for improvement in the previous inspection. The school has since established good systems to check attendance and this has led to significant improvement over the last few years. Attendance is now broadly average and the school spares no effort to improve it further. The school's sharp focus on punctuality is effective and very little lateness to lessons was seen during the inspection.

### **The leadership and management require improvement**

- The headteacher is very ambitious for the school. He, the senior leaders and governors have worked energetically since his appointment, and with some success, to improve the school. Together they give a clear direction to the school's work, but leadership and management are not good because not all students achieve as well as they can.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have robust systems for giving them an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Their self-evaluation is honest and generally identifies appropriate actions to take the school forward. Sometimes, as in the case of mathematics, these actions are not taken rapidly enough to pre-empt students' underachievement.
- The school has established policies and staff training to give students regular practice of their skills in literacy and mathematics, for example in form periods or through regular extra lessons in reading. The impact of these arrangements across subjects is variable.
- Increases in salary for teachers is firmly linked to the Teachers' Standards and to teachers' impact on students' achievement. Teachers who do not achieve their targets are refused an increase in salary.
- The performance management system is also well linked to good, readily available professional development. Teachers and middle leaders therefore feel well supported and held to account for their work but the systems have not had enough impact on students' achievement. This is because the quality of teaching is too variable to secure rapid progress for some students.
- The school has successfully tackled some of the areas for improvement from the previous

inspection but there is more work to be done. The curriculum has been revised and unsuccessful courses have been removed. New courses have been introduced that provide a better balance of academic and vocational courses which are very closely matched to students' interests and aspirations, including those of the more-able. This has resulted in improved achievement in science.

- The rich variety of activities and clubs available during the lunch hour and after school contributes greatly to students' enjoyment of school and their good social and cultural development. Students have many opportunities for sports, musical activities and charity work.
- The school arranges education off-site, through its many local partnerships, for small groups of students who are at risk of leaving full-time education before the end of Year 11. Courses lead to meaningful experiences and qualifications and students' attendance, behaviour and progress are regularly checked. The success of such arrangements is evident in the very small proportion of students who do not progress to further education, training or employment when they leave school.
- The local authority provides effective external quality assurance for the school.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet all requirements.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is experienced and committed to improving the school. Governors are involved in the school's self-evaluation and therefore know the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors have been prepared to take hard decisions about staffing, including through their involvement in performance management. Governors are increasingly aware of their responsibility for raising standards and ensure that the school's finances are sound. Their spending of the pupil premium has resulted in better achievement in English for the pupils who receive this support. Nevertheless, governors have not been able to help the school to resolve underachievement in some subjects quickly enough for these and some other groups of students, notably in mathematics.

It is recommended that the school arrange an external review of the work of the governing body to evaluate its effectiveness.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	105576
<b>Local authority</b>	Manchester
<b>Inspection number</b>	400787

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	681
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Brian Kiely
<b>Headteacher</b>	James Keulemans
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 March 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 795 0711
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