

Saint John Houghton Catholic Voluntary Academy

Abbot Road, Kirk Hallam, Ilkeston, DE7 4HX

Inspection dates

5–6 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Most students make good progress and achieve well. Achievement in mathematics is particularly strong. Achievement in English is good and in science it is improving quickly. Good teaching establishes a positive and supportive atmosphere in classrooms so that students become confident learners. Teachers pay very good attention to improving students' writing and reading skills across subjects.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress because staff know their needs well and provide effective support and guidance.
- Students are courteous, well mannered and orderly. They behave well in lessons and disruption to learning in lessons is uncommon. Most students say they feel safe in school. Students are keen to take on responsibilities, such as peer mentors.
- The headteacher is ambitious for the school and sets high expectations of staff and students. She is well supported by leaders, staff and governors. Staff morale is good. Leaders are successful in improving teaching and achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding and a small amount requires improvement.
- In a few lessons, more-able students are not fully challenged to do their best work.
- Teachers' marking of students' work does not always provide useful guidance on how to improve.
- Students are not always provided with enough chances to improve their skills as independent learners.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited parts of 29 lessons. Three observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders. Students' work in their books and folders was analysed during lessons and separately for key subjects.
- Meetings were held with leaders, staff, governors, and groups of students from each year group.
- Documents looked at included the school's self-evaluation summary, school improvement plans and those relating to safeguarding. Information on students' attainment, progress, attendance and behaviour were analysed.
- Parents' views were taken into account through the 88 responses to Parent View (the Ofsted on-line survey), the school's most recent survey of parents' views, and a telephone conversation between the lead inspector and a parent.
- The views of staff were taken into account through the 43 questionnaires received. The school's recent surveys of student and staff views were considered.

Inspection team

Gill Salter-Smith, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
William Cassell	Additional Inspector
Peter Bailey	Additional Inspector
Clare Adamson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school converted to become an academy school in March 2012. The school is managed by a governing body. The school is part of the Saint Robert Lawrence Catholic Academy Trust.
- When its predecessor, known as Saint John Houghton Catholic School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good.
- A new headteacher was appointed from September 2012.
- Currently there is an acting Chair of the Governing Body.
- The school is much smaller than an average-sized secondary school.
- Almost all students are from White British backgrounds.
- A below average proportion of students are eligible for pupil premium funding, the additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. A below average proportion of students is supported at school action plus or has a statement of special educational needs.
- Alternative courses are provided for some students at Derby College and Kirkhallam Community Technology and Sports College.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and ensure that all teaching is at least good so that students make even better progress by:
 - providing tasks that get the best out of all students, particularly the more able, in all lessons
 - making sure that across all subjects students benefit from marking that gives them clear and helpful guidance on how they can improve
 - providing more chances for students to develop and improve their skills as independent learners so that they spend more time finding things out for themselves, sharing ideas in pairs and groups, practising their spoken communication skills, and reflecting on and making decisions about their own learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress across most subjects from their mostly better than average starting points.
- Achievement in mathematics is particularly strong with attainment above average. The proportion of students making expected progress and better than expected progress is higher than found in other schools. Students enjoy mathematics and are continually challenged to do their best. They have the confidence to attempt challenging problems and make mistakes. Staff have the expertise to help them to work out how to resolve problems for themselves. The policy of entering the examination before the end of Year 11 does not hold students back from achieving the highest grades of which they are capable. This is because, where necessary, they can re-enter and improve on the grades already gained.
- Achievement in English is good. GCSE results in 2012 were a little above average but not significantly so. Current Year 11 students are on track to make at least good progress and reach above average attainment; this is because staff have systematically reviewed and revised their teaching. Students write in a well structured way for many different purposes and audiences in English and in many other subjects. In religious education, they produce carefully considered and well formulated arguments. Reading is encouraged as part of many lessons and as a regular habit. Students are articulate and clear when discussing their ideas, but in some lessons there are few chances for them to reflect upon and discuss their work.
- Achievement in science is good overall. Following disappointing results in 2012, achievement is improving quickly because students are now better matched to GCSE courses and assessment and teaching have improved.
- The proportion of students gaining the highest grades A* to A at GCSE is improving across subjects. The numbers of students achieving the English baccalaureate is set to improve significantly in 2013.
- There is some variation between the attainment and progress of boys and girls from year group to year group. The gap between girls and boys is closing because the school has worked effectively to find ways of helping students, particularly boys, who have fallen behind to catch up. The school's focus on supporting every individual student reflects their commitment to equality of opportunity.
- Students known to be eligible for free school meals are catching up with other students. In English, they are around a third of a GCSE grade behind other students and around a half a grade behind in mathematics. Additional adult support has had a marked effect of supporting these students. Catch-up funding for the Year 7 students identified as requiring intervention is used well to provide extra support, particularly in literacy. Consequently, their progress is accelerating.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress. This is because staff know the individuals well, and make sure that students receive the support and guidance they need while encouraging their independence.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most of the teaching is good. Some is outstanding and there is a small amount of teaching that requires improvement.
- Teachers establish positive working relationships with students. Students feel well supported by their teachers and not afraid to try things out. This is especially the case in mathematics.
- Students' literacy skills have improved in most subjects because staff have well-thought out approaches to improving spelling and punctuation, specialist vocabulary and writing structures.
- Teachers have good knowledge of the subjects they teach. They give clear explanations of difficult concepts. They recognise students' misconceptions and their questions help students to work through problems towards greater clarity of understanding. This is particularly the case in mathematics. Electronic whiteboards and laptop computers are used well to support learning in most subjects.
- Assessment is frequent and accurate, and information on students' progress is used by many staff to plan tasks that get the most out of students, whatever their ability. Students are aware of their academic targets and most aspire to achieve or better them. In most lessons, students know what they must do to reach the highest levels or grades, but this is not always the case.
- Teaching assistants work effectively under the guidance of teachers to provide well-targeted support for disabled students and those who have special educational needs so that they make good progress.
- In the very best lessons, teachers expect a great deal of students. They plan well-sequenced tasks that build knowledge, understanding and confidence. Tasks are demanding so that students use their own initiative to find things out, work collaboratively in pairs and groups, discuss their work and share ideas with each other.
- Where teaching can be improved:
 - teachers' marking of written work is not frequent enough nor does it make clear to students what they must do to improve
 - tasks in some lessons do not provide enough challenge for more-able students
 - students do not get enough chance to develop skills as independent learners because they do not spend enough time finding things out for themselves and sharing ideas in pairs and groups
 - students seldom have opportunities to reflect on and make decisions about their own learning
 - students do not have enough opportunities for practising their spoken communication skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Most students enjoy learning and aspire to achieve well. They appreciate the support of their teachers. Students apply themselves well to tasks in lessons, getting down to work quickly and concentrating well. When given the opportunity, they work well in pairs and groups to share ideas.
 - Behaviour is good. Students are courteous, well-mannered and considerate. Low-level disruption
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to learning is uncommon. Break and lunchtimes are well supervised by adults, and are social occasions where students get on well with each other. Positive relationships between students and staff contribute to a sociable and orderly atmosphere.

- Most students feel safe in school. They say that bullying is rare and most students say that adults in the school help to sort out any problems they have quickly. Student mentors and prefects take their roles seriously and play an important part in keeping students well-cared for.
- Students have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in many different circumstances, including when using modern technology. They know about the different types of bullying, including homophobic bullying.
- Students' attendance is better than average and students are most often punctual to school and lessons. The school is rigorous in promoting good attendance.
- Students value the rewards they are offered and appreciate the need for sanctions. There are few exclusions. Case studies demonstrate the school's success in helping to improve the attitudes and behaviour of students who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is ambitious for the school. She provides a strong drive for improvement and sets a clear agenda for improvement. She is well supported by leaders, staff and governors. Staff morale is good.
 - Leaders are successful in bringing about improvements to achievement and teaching, especially in English, literacy and science. Systems that hold all staff to account for the impact of their work on students' progress, alongside well-focused training opportunities, are helping to improve teaching and raise students' achievement. Staff performance is increasingly well managed; weaker performance is supported and often improves quickly.
 - Systematic checks on students' progress make sure that staff give extra support to students who are at risk of underachieving in all subjects and across all year groups. Plans to raise the attainment of these students are checked increasingly by middle leaders to assure a positive impact.
 - Self-evaluation is accurate. The right priorities for improvement are identified in the school improvement plan which strongly supports the drive of improvement.
 - The curriculum is well planned to meet individual students' needs. Very good partnerships with local education and training institutions help the school to meet a wider range of needs. The school checks that students attending off-site provision are safeguarded suitably and that the provision matches their needs well.
 - Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. The school is undergoing improvements to its systems of risk assessment and site supervision, and has increased the amount of staff and governor training in relation to child protection and safeguarding.
 - The academy trust provides good support for the school. There is an appropriate balance between holding the leaders to account and ensuring that the academy benefits from good
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practice within the academy trust.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors know how students are performing in relation to the national picture and how well teaching affects students' progress because of the comprehensive reports from senior leaders. They are aware of the school's priorities and check on how well it is improving. Governors are aware that there are too few visits to the school to see work of the school for themselves and they are working on improving this aspect of their work. Governors provide a suitable balance of support and challenge. They support leaders in managing the performance of staff and in improving teaching. They take responsibilities with regard to safeguarding very seriously. Governors are undertaking further training to ensure they increase expertise in safeguarding and are able to more fully challenge leaders on students' performance. The budget is balanced and well managed. Governors know how pupil premium funding is spent but have a less detailed knowledge of its impact on students' progress.
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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	137908
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	413386

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	604
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Boott
Headteacher	Joan McCarthy
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0115 932 2896
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