

St Cecilia's Roman Catholic High School

Chapel Hill, Longridge, Preston, PR3 2XA

Inspection dates 2–3 October 2013

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		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- There is not enough good teaching. Teachers do not always plan to meet the needs of different groups so some students are not sufficiently challenged to do their best. Teachers' marking is not consistently helpful.
- The teaching of literacy skills is not consistent across subjects.
- Achievement requires improvement because it varies too much between subjects and the proportion of students leaving school with five good GCSE qualifications, including English and mathematics, is not as high as it should be.
- Although leaders have made improvements to teaching, they do not check closely enough that teachers follow whole-school policies.
- A few staff are not clear about how leaders' decisions are made. Some have been reluctant to engage in the school's strategy for improving teaching.
- The school's improvement planning is not ambitious enough in terms of its success criteria for increasing rates of students' progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Students' behaviour is good, their attitudes to learning are positive and their attendance is above average.
- The school's senior leaders and governors have a clear view of what needs to be done to secure improvement and have good working relationships with the local authority and other schools to support further development.
- The school makes very good provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
- The school works well with parents, families and other agencies to ensure that students receive good quality pastoral support.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 26 lessons, of which five were joint observations with senior staff.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, school leaders, staff, groups of students and a representative from the local authority.
- Records relating to attendance and behaviour, information on the quality of teaching and the setting of targets for teachers were scrutinised. A variety of documents was examined including the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation, teachers' planning, information about students' progress, the minutes of governing body meetings and the school's procedures for handling complaints.
- Inspectors took into account 39 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and considered the results of the school's own survey of parents' satisfaction.
- The school's arrangements for ensuring students' safety were considered.
- Questionnaires representing the views of 24 members of staff were analysed.

Inspection team

Shirley Gornall, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mark Shenton

Additional Inspector

Bernard Robinson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government to support students known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authority and the children of military personnel) is less than half the national average, but growing.
- Most students are of White British heritage and very few students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is above average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- A small number of students attend off-site provision, run by Preston College, to follow vocational courses. They access most of their education in school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is good or outstanding so that students' progress is consistently strong by:
 - improving pace and challenge in lessons, especially at Key Stage 3
 - developing planning to raise achievement across the school for groups of students
 - providing students with opportunities to respond to teachers' feedback
 - consistently implementing the school's literacy policy.
- Develop good leadership at all levels by:
 - making better use of data to target actions for improvement
 - ensuring that the school's planning for improvement at all levels is based on ambitious success criteria which drive the work of the whole-school community
 - checking that whole-school initiatives to improve teaching are adopted in all areas of the school and that these impact on students' progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because there is too much variation between subjects over time.
- The proportion of students attaining five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics is similar to that found nationally but has been on a declining trend since 2010.
- Attainment at this threshold fell well short of the school's own target in 2013. By contrast, the proportion of students achieving five good GCSE grades has risen.
- In 2012, students made excellent progress in mathematics, but this was not sustained in 2013 when boys' achievement in mathematics was much weaker than that of girls and results fell sharply. By contrast, the achievement of students in English rose significantly in 2013.
- The school has identified that middle- and lower-attaining students do not make as strong progress as those who enter school with high prior attainment. Those who are higher-attaining achieve well as shown by the increasing proportion attaining A* and A grades.
- The attainment of students in English literature and history is consistently high, with many students attaining the highest grades and reflecting strong progress from their various starting points. In other subjects, such as technology courses, attainment is lower than expected.
- The small number of students eligible for the pupil premium attain less well than their peers, by around a grade and a half at GCSE. The school is making appropriate use of available funding to reduce this gap through initiatives such as individual tuition, mentoring and the provision of summer school support. The school's evaluation of the impact of specific interventions is at an early stage of development so it is not clear which initiatives are making the most positive difference.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is being used effectively to diagnose and improve the reading skills of students. These students show gains in their ability to comprehend texts and are making more rapid progress as a result of structured support. Older students provide enthusiastic support to younger ones through the 'Reading Warriors' scheme and have a good impact on their skills and motivation.
- The school promotes reading for pleasure, including by personal reading in form time and in English. Some students are keen to read but others are more reluctant. Some teachers actively develop students' reading skills by talking to them about their reading and providing opportunities for them to develop their vocabulary, such as in history. However, the school's literacy policy is at an early stage of implementation so some opportunities to address these skills are missed in lessons. Students' literacy targets sometimes lack ambition.
- Students apply numeracy skills in subjects including geography and science but there is no whole-school strategy to ensure that these skills are systematically developed.
- The achievement of students with special educational needs requires improvement. Their progress is well supported by teaching assistants in some lessons but work is not always adapted sufficiently by teachers to meet their needs.
- The school does not make use of early entry at GCSE.
- Students who attend work-related training at places away from the school gain practical qualifications as well as core GCSEs. They go on to further study or employment when they leave school.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although much good teaching was seen during the inspection, there was too much that required improvement and very little that was outstanding. No inadequate teaching was seen. The weaknesses in teaching result in some students not making the progress of which they are capable. Teaching observed during the inspection was stronger at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage

3.

- Where teaching requires improvement, teachers do not plan work to meet the different abilities of everyone in the class. Students are given criteria for 'good,' 'even better' and 'fantastic' work in many lessons, but with varying success. In the best lessons these expectations are discussed by students and teachers, with teachers adjusting activities or questions according to students' responses. In other lessons, guidance for students is weaker.
- Some teachers do not seize opportunities that arise to develop students' thinking. In the most effective lessons, students are continually challenged to explore ideas and express their opinions. This was the case in a captivating history lesson in which students' understanding of the causes of the First World War was built through highly effective questioning which required them to develop on each other's analyses. Students made rapid progress and relished their learning. In weaker lessons, insufficient attention is paid to the different starting points and skills of students. Questioning is restricted in some lessons so that deeper responses are not sought, or only expected of volunteers.
- The school recognises that improving students' literacy skills across subjects is essential to accelerating their progress. Some teachers are very confident in tackling this, such as in an exciting art lesson in which students collaborated to reproduce a drawing from their 'collective memory' and then talked and wrote about the strategies they had followed, using good subject vocabulary. In other teaching, there is insufficient emphasis on the development of speaking, reading and writing skills either in teaching or in marking students' work. This results in errors persisting and students not enriching their expression.
- Students are very supportive of their teachers, but say that the quality of teaching in school is variable. They enjoy work which challenges them and think they learn a lot through group activities. They do not like 'copying from the board or book' which they say is a characteristic of some lessons. They say that homework is set regularly but is not always spread across a week so that they become overloaded at some points and have no homework at others.
- Some teachers' marking is of a very good standard and provides students with clear advice on how to improve their work, whereas some is too perfunctory. Students are not always given opportunities to act on their teachers' advice to make improvements to their work. In science, there is some good practice where students are given time directed to reviewing and acting upon their teachers' feedback, but this is not a feature of all subjects, so marking is not always effective in boosting students' progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students are proud of their school. They are polite, friendly and good-humoured. They behave well in lessons and state that there are very few occasions when learning is disrupted.
- Students cooperate well with each other when they are asked to work in groups. They provide their peers with constructive advice on how to improve their performance, such as in physical education, and encourage each other to work with confidence.
- The school is proactive in teaching students about different forms of bullying and in helping them to protect themselves when they are online. Students report that there is a small amount of bullying in school but that staff take prompt action to combat it. Younger students have confidence that older ones will also help them to resolve problems.
- Many students make a positive contribution to school and the wider community. They willingly take on leadership roles including by providing mentoring support to younger students. Prefects are respected and undertake their duties zealously. The Fair Trade Group has had notable success with its regular fund-raising stall. Students speak enthusiastically of their hard work in supporting CAFOD's 'Action for Global Justice'.
- Students move sensibly around the school and feel safe; they praise the effective steps the school has taken to improve site security.
- Attendance has risen and is above the national average. Students arrive punctually to school and to lessons. Very few students are persistently absent from school.

- There have been no recent permanent exclusions from school. A few students have received fixed-term exclusions and receive support for their reintegration into school.
- The vast majority of parents agree that the school has high standards of behaviour and that any bullying is dealt with effectively.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The senior leadership team has not yet secured the full backing of a minority of staff for the things they want to do. Some significant improvements have been made since the previous inspection, including improvements to how students' progress is tracked, but the school's full potential to improve has not been realised.
- The headteacher and senior leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have maintained a strong focus on improving teaching since the previous inspection. Structured opportunities have been provided for teachers to work collaboratively, within and beyond school. These have promoted debate, been valued and have improved teaching. However, the sharing of good practice has not been as effective as possible because some staff have not participated in these activities.
- The school's improvement planning is comprehensive and addresses key priorities, but the criteria by which success is to be judged are not sufficiently ambitious regarding the progress students are expected to make. Self-evaluation is overgenerous in some respects because of this.
- Leaders check on the work of teachers and students but do not always link these checks to consideration of progress made by different groups of students. Consequently, the progress made by middle-attaining and lower-attaining students is not as strong as that of those who are higher-attaining.
- Many middle leaders are passionate about their subjects and work hard to ensure that students enjoy learning. There are some weaknesses in planning at subject level, including in technology subjects that middle leaders have not addressed.
- Pastoral leadership is excellent, leading to the vast majority of students feeling safe and happy in school. Year leaders and form tutors know their students well and, as one student put it, 'they care for us and are there for us.' The monitoring of students' behaviour has improved significantly but data is not always used well to analyse patterns of behaviour.
- The school's success in promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a notable strength. The school does not tolerate any discrimination or harassment. Students actively reflect on their own beliefs and values during assembly and in religious education. They show sensitivity to others' views.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has been strengthened by new members whose focus is on supporting and challenging leaders to raise achievement for all within the context of the school's mission.
 - Governors have reviewed their policies and protocols, including those relating to complaints, to ensure that procedures are clear and that a code of conduct for governors is observed.
 - They have adopted a new appraisal policy that makes clear the relationship between teachers' performance and remuneration.
 - Governors are establishing links with departments in school so that they have first-hand information about the impact of improvement work. They plan to attend training provided by the local authority to further improve their 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

Unique reference number	119800
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	423031

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	401
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr David Chinnery
Headteacher	Mr Stephen Tattersall
Date of previous school inspection	14 September 2011
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