

# St Augustine of Canterbury Catholic High School

Boardmans Lane, Blackbrook, St Helens, Merseyside, WA11 9BB

## Inspection dates

8–9 October 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
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 has serious weaknesses.

- Achievement is inadequate. The proportion of students attaining five or more higher grade GCSEs, including English and mathematics, is well below average. As a result of previous weaker teaching, too few students have made the expected rate of progress, across a range of subjects, particularly English.
- Not enough teaching is consistently good or better and the impact of teaching over time is inadequate
- Teachers do not always use information about how well students are learning to plan activities that meet the needs of all learners.
- The marking of students' work is not consistently good and does not always help students know how to improve their work.
- Learning activities are not always imaginative and relevant enough to deepen students' understanding. Students are not given enough opportunities to talk about their learning in lessons.
- Leaders do not yet fully utilise the school's systems to track the progress of different groups of students to best effect in order to check they are doing as well as they can. As a result, there is too much variation in the achievement of different groups of students.
- Best teaching practices are not shared widely enough throughout the school to improve the practice of individuals.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors, have taken decisive action and made difficult decisions to deal with weaknesses in staff performance. As a result, teaching and achievement are improving, especially in mathematics.
- Students are very well cared for through the school's strong pastoral care systems.
- Bullying is rare and students say they feel very safe. Behaviour around the school is good.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 33 part lessons taught by 33 teachers. Three lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also made brief visits to other classrooms to look at students' work.
- The inspectors looked closely at the school's information on students' progress, documents relating to behaviour and safeguarding and minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- Meetings were held with four groups of students, staff, eight members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- A telephone conversation was also held with school's improvement consultant.
- Inspectors took account of the 17 responses from parents recorded in the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), together with the 59 responses to the parents' questionnaire carried out by the school in April 2013.
- The inspectors took account of the 21 responses to the staff questionnaire provide by Ofsted.

## Inspection team

Alan Parkinson, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Paul Lathom	Additional Inspector
Jacqueline Rothery	Additional Inspector
John Leigh	Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with section 44 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), 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 circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.*

### Information about this school

- St Augustine of Canterbury is a smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium is above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children of service families and those children that are looked after.
- The vast majority of students are White British and few students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below the national average. The proportion of those supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school enters students for some GCSE examinations earlier than usual.
- The school works in partnership with other local schools to provide support to some students.
- The school uses the local authority's Launch Pad, Building Futures and Instant Training to provide vocational courses for some students in Years 10 and 11.
- The school uses St Helen's Pupil Referral Unit to provide alternative off-site provision for a few students.
- There have been several changes to the leadership of the English department over recent years. The current English subject leader was appointed in June 2013.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least consistently good in order to raise standards across all subjects, in mathematics and particularly in English, so that all groups of students make at least good progress that is sustained over time, by:
  - ensuring that all teachers make effective use of assessment data when planning activities to enable all groups of students to learn more quickly
  - ensuring that learning activities are imaginative and relevant and are designed in a way that deepens students' understanding of the subject being taught
  - providing further opportunities for students to talk about and consolidate their learning in class
  - ensuring that teachers' marking of students' work consistently provides students with clear and specific guidance on what they need to do to improve and that teachers' written comments are always followed up by students.
- Further improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
  - sharing more widely the good and outstanding practice that currently exists in the school
  - ensuring that the school's systems to track and monitor students' progress are used well to evaluate the achievement of all groups of students and to ensure they achieve equally well.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is inadequate

- From students' below average starting points on entry to the school, their progress over time in English and mathematics is inadequate. By the end of Year 11 the overall standards reached by students are significantly below average; consequently their achievement overall is inadequate.
- Since 2011, the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, although low, has been gradually increasing. However, this proportion fell in 2013 due to a sharp decline in the performance of students in English. In mathematics, although the proportion of students gaining A\* to C grades increased further, it is still below average.
- Progress is now starting to speed up although it is still variable and, as such, is not yet fast enough to make up for students' previous underachievement. This is because the quality of teaching is not yet consistently good.
- In 2013, in mathematics, this trend of improvement continued. The much better teaching in mathematics is helping students to catch up.
- In 2013, the school entered some students early for their GCSE examination in mathematics. Those that did not achieve a GCSE grade at A\* to C had the opportunity to re-take the examination. As a result, almost one-quarter achieved a higher grade. The school is not entering students early for GCSE examinations in 2014.
- Although standards fell in 2013 too few students made the expected rate of progress, school data and inspection evidence shows that the current progress of students in English across the school is now accelerating.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding, (provided by the government to support those students who failed to reach the national expectation in reading at the end of Year 6) is also being used to good effect to boost achievement, particularly in reading. One-to-one and small group tuition has been provided and this is helping students to make better progress in reading.
- The most-able students achieve better than students from other ability groups. The proportions of students reaching the higher GCSE grades A\* to A has increased over the last three years in mathematics, although in 2013 it fell slightly in English. Although an above-average proportion of the most-able students make expected progress, not enough make good progress.
- A significant number of students from different groups underachieve. In the past, these have included boys and middle-ability students. The achievement made by disabled students and those with special educational needs has also varied over time. Weak teaching, often arising from inaccurate assessments of what students know and can do is a key reason why this has occurred. Although the school has now strengthened the way in which it assesses students, and is now using this information more effectively to check on students' progress, it is not yet used well enough to check that the different groups of students achieve equally well.
- In the past, students supported through the pupil premium have made inadequate progress because they have not been taught well enough. In 2012, students known to be eligible for free school meals achieved approximately one GCSE grade lower than non-eligible students in English and almost one and a quarter grades lower in mathematics. The school has improved the way it uses the pupil premium funding and this is now helping students to make better progress in English and mathematics. Additional individual support for English and mathematics is now helping students to make better progress and as a result the attainment gap is closing.
- The school has provided some students in Years 10 and 11 with a range of vocational experiences beyond the school and attendance at such courses is good. This enables them to make more informed choices about their future.

### The quality of teaching

### inadequate

- The impact of teaching over time is inadequate. Teaching is improving and this is reflected in the

large proportion of good or better teaching observed during the inspection. However, not enough teaching is consistently good or better over time and, as a result, students do not make sufficient progress.

- In the weaker lessons seen during the inspection teachers do not always set tasks and activities that enable students to learn well, whatever their ability. This is because the activities are either too easy or too hard. Teachers do not always use information on students' learning and progress well enough to plan lessons and set work that enable students to learn well and make rapid progress.
- Teachers do not always provide enough opportunities for students to talk about their work with others, or to share and develop ideas or review each others' work. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge. Where teaching is good, tasks are well planned and students learn well. They use effective questioning to check students' understanding of the work and to challenge students further to encourage them to think for themselves and develop their understanding.
- In a few of the lessons observed, teaching was outstanding. Very enthusiastic teaching engaged students fully in their learning. For example, in a Year 10 business studies lesson all students were engaged in calm and constructive discussions about stock control that supported each others' learning well. Through the teacher's high expectations, extension activities were provided to further challenge some students enabling them to make even greater progress.
- Students say that they now enjoy their learning more as teaching is becoming more interesting and engaging. They show positive attitudes and behave well in lessons.
- The teaching of mathematics has been strengthened considerably, including the appointment of several new staff, and has resulted in improved progress in mathematics. More recently, strategies to improve the quality of teaching in English, where some outstanding teaching was seen, are also beginning to accelerate students' progress. The use of student 'maths buddies' and 'reading mentors', is also having a positive impact on developing students' numeracy and literacy skills.
- The standard of marking is improving. Some marking of students' work is good and provides students with clear written comments that tell them what they need to do to improve further. However, this good practice is not consistently applied across all areas. As a result, opportunities to take learning further are missed and students do not always make good progress.
- Teaching assistants are used effectively and make a positive contribution to students' learning, particularly to support disabled students and those who have special educational needs and those identified by the school for additional support.

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

### **are good**

- In the large proportion of good or better lessons seen students behaved well and showed good attitudes to learning and this is helping them to make better progress. Where teaching is not good enough students become passive. Behaviour around the school is good. This is because students have a good understanding of the right ways to behave and are clear about the school's systems to manage behaviour. Relationships between students and between students and adults are good.
- Disruption to learning in lessons is uncommon although a very small number of pupils occasionally lose concentration, for example, when teachers do not provide work that is imaginative and challenging enough to hold their interest.
- Students are polite and courteous to each other, staff and visitors. They have a clear understanding of the different forms of bullying and report that bullying is rare. Students say should any instances of bullying occur they are resolved. They know that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- Students report that they feel very safe in school because they are well cared for by teachers and other adults. The strong pastoral care system is very effective and is valued by students.
- Students have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, for example, learning about how far they can trust people and how to use the internet safely. The school engages well

with parents and arranges activities for them, such as raising their awareness of e-safety.

- A strong Christian ethos contributes well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Links with Peru, for example help to broaden students' horizons and awareness of other cultures. Students are proactive in raising money for charities, such as Winston's Wish and Willowbrook Hospice. They are keen to care for others such as by helping the elderly at Brookfield Care Home.
- There are many opportunities for students to take on positions of responsibility, such as members of the school council, house captains and prefects helping staff with duties at break times. Reading mentors and maths buddies are keen to help other students improve their literacy and numeracy skills.
- The responses to Parent View and the school's parental survey indicate that the very large majority of parents agree that their children are well cared for, enjoy school and feel safe.
- Attendance has improved and is broadly in line with national averages. Over recent years, due to the effective actions taken by leaders and managers, the percentage of students who are persistently absent has fallen.

## The leadership and management

## requires improvement

- The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body have accurately identified the school's strengths and areas for further development. The school's main priority is to raise students' achievement further, particularly in English and mathematics and, rightly, there is a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching
- Senior leaders have also taken effective action to improve the quality of leadership. The effective leadership of mathematics overtime for example, has resulted in improvements in students' achievement year on year. Several changes of leadership of English in recent years have hampered the school's ability to sustain improvements. Even so, new leadership in English, along with better teaching, is now helping to turn this around. These improvements show that leaders and managers have the ability, skills and determination to continue to improve further.
- Regular lesson observations and monitoring systems provide accurate information on teaching quality across the school. Teachers are provided with feedback on their performance. This ensures that teaching continues to improve. The headteacher ensures that a relevant programme of staff training is provided and ensures the governing body are clear that teachers' pay awards are linked to their performance. Some subject teams are making good use of sharing best practice but this is not consistent across the school. Systems to track students' progress have been improved and are now more robust. Assessment data are now more accurate and are used to set higher targets. However, the information on the progress of different groups of students is not always used precisely enough by leaders to tackle the difference in the achievements of different groups and to ensure that all students achieve equally well.
- Bespoke programmes for Year 11 students to access additional support in English and mathematics every day which are helping to raise achievement.
- The curriculum is enriched by a well-planned programme of extra-curricular activities. A variety of school trips and visitors to the school help to enrich students' learning experiences and develop a greater understanding of the world around them. These opportunities, together with a wide range of sport, music and other activities, ensures that students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- The school receives effective and valuable support from the local authority; this has, for example, included training for governors. A range of partnership activities with other local schools and organisations provide students with opportunities, to develop wider personal skills.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body regularly receives information about the school's performance through for example, the reports they receive from the school, from external consultants, and through their more regular visits to the school. Training has helped them to better understand the school's performance in comparison with other schools. Consequently, governors have a more

accurate understanding of what needs to be done to improve the school further. This has enabled the governing body to hold the school to account and use performance management systems to set appropriate and challenging targets. This has enabled them to take effective action to address any areas of staff underperformance.

- The governing body has a good understanding of the school's finances including how the funding for those supported by the pupil premium is allocated. However not all governors are always clear as to the progress of different groups throughout the school in order to check that the gaps in progress between the groups are closing.
- Safeguarding procedures and policies meet statutory requirements.



## 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>	104833
<b>Local authority</b>	St. Helens
<b>Inspection number</b>	429632

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>	644
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Elizabeth Dolan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Linda Mousdale
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 July 2012
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