

Ellesmere Port Catholic High School

Capenhurst Lane, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, CH65 7AQ

Inspection dates 13–14 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of Key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Achievement in Key Stage 3 and in some GCSE courses is inadequate.
- The progress that disabled students and those with special educational needs make is inadequate.
- The progress of different groups of students in mathematics is consistently weak.
- The sixth form is inadequate. Students have made insufficient progress as many have been allowed to start inappropriate courses and also because their attendance is poor.
- Teaching overall is inadequate. It is not strong enough to rapidly improve the slow progress students make, particularly in Key Stage 3. Teachers' expectations are too low, lessons do not hold students' attention and too many do not enjoy learning.
- The rate of improvement is not fast enough because governors, leaders and managers do not hold teachers and other staff to account well enough for poor performance.
- Teachers, school leaders and managers are not sufficiently skilled in analysing the performance of their students to pinpoint weaknesses in order to implement suitable improvements.
- Leaders including governors have been too slow to address deficiencies in safety procedures in the design and technology department. Effective action was only taken during the inspection.
- Too many students do not attend regularly enough. This has been the case over recent years. Learning time is lost because some students and some teachers are not punctual to lessons.
- Leaders at all levels are not demonstrating the capacity to drive the improvements necessary to accelerate students' achievement. Consequently, the school's overall effectiveness has declined since the last inspection.
- A high proportion of parents expressed concerns about the effectiveness of the school's leadership and management.

The school has the following strengths

- Recently the progress of middle- and high-ability students in English and mathematics at Key Stage 4 has improved.
- Students' personal development is good.
- Year 7 students' numeracy and reading skills improve quickly because of the additional support they receive.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 33 part lessons taught by 33 different teachers. They also made several shorter visits to lessons. Some of these activities involved working with senior leaders. Inspectors worked with senior staff while observing teaching and learning and reviewing work previously completed by students.
- Inspectors spoke to many students during breaks, lunchtimes and during lessons. They also spoke to a group of Year 7 students about their improvement in literacy and numeracy.
- Inspectors observed activities taking place during form and registration time.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, senior leaders and other staff. A discussion was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including reports, internal and external data about students' attainment and progress, behaviour and attendance records, and students' work. They scrutinised safeguarding procedures and records.
- During the inspection 42 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), parental surveys conducted by the school, one letter and two phone calls to inspectors were taken into account. Inspectors reviewed 55 responses to a staff questionnaire. Inspectors conducted a survey with 58 Year 7 students to ascertain their experience of bullying within the school.

Inspection team

Neil MacKenzie, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Christine Addison	Additional Inspector
Johan MacKinnon	Additional Inspector
Victoria Beer	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 special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- Ellesmere Port Catholic High School is an average-size secondary school. A higher proportion of girls than boys attend the school.
- The proportion of students who are supported by the pupil premium is similar to the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- Most students are White British.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is average.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is lower than found nationally. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is significantly lower than the national average.
- The school uses alternative provision at West Cheshire College and The Bridge School for a very small number of students.
- In 2012, the school met 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?

- Improve teaching to be consistently good or better in order to accelerate students' progress in all subjects, especially mathematics, and particularly at Key Stage 3, in the sixth form and for disabled students and those with special educational needs by:
 - eradicating inadequate teaching
 - raising teachers' expectations of what students can achieve
 - using assessment information to plan learning activities that provide suitable challenge through matching tasks more carefully to students' learning needs
 - checking students' understanding throughout lessons and adjusting activities or strategies when the rate of progress slows
 - presenting more interesting topics and a wider range of learning activities in order to improve the enjoyment and enthusiasm students have for learning
 - improving the quality of questioning to ensure students think more deeply about their work and have to explain and justify their ideas
 - applying whole-school approaches consistently to the marking of students' work, providing clear guidance for improvement and making certain that all students follow this advice
 - improving the effectiveness of teaching assistants through involving them in the assessment of students' work and the planning of lessons, and through teachers having a more flexible approach to how teaching assistants are deployed to support students' learning.

- Improve attendance and students' and some teachers' punctuality in arriving to lessons by:
 - analysing attendance data rigorously to ascertain which groups of pupils are not attending well and taking prompt and effective action to improve their attendance
 - monitoring students' punctuality in arriving on time to every lesson and taking prompt and effective action to address any lateness
 - reminding teachers of the need to show a good example to students by their arrival to lessons on time.

- Improve leadership and management and governance by:
 - ensuring teachers, leaders and managers at all levels rigorously evaluate the impact of their work on students' achievement, attendance and behaviour, and that they use these evaluations to guide further improvements
 - increasing the rigour with which governors, leaders and managers hold teachers and other staff to account for making improvements rapidly, particularly with regard to students' safety and achievement
 - increasing the involvement of parents and students as partners in school improvement.

- An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this and other aspects of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Achievement is inadequate because students make inadequate progress across Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. In addition, there are a number of subjects in Key Stage 4 where students' progress is inadequate. Disabled students and those with special educational needs also make inadequate progress.
- The attainment of students on entry to the school is broadly average, apart from the students currently in Year 11 whose prior attainment was significantly above average.
- The proportion of students who achieve at least a C grade in five GCSEs including English and mathematics has been broadly average over recent years but has shown no sign of improvement. The proportion of the most-able students attaining the highest grades in 2012 was poor. The progress made by middle-ability and the most-able students in English and mathematics at Key Stage 4 improved in 2013 but the progress of low-ability students in English required improvement and in mathematics it was inadequate.
- In 2012, students' progress in different subjects presents a mixed picture. Students' progress in art, modern foreign languages, information and communication technology, religious education and textiles is good. However, progress in geography, design and technology (including food technology), and in business studies is inadequate. Progress in history and in physical education requires improvement.
- In 2012, students who were known to be eligible for free school meals attained on average one grade lower than other students. In 2013, this gap narrowed to about two thirds of a grade. The gap in progress also narrowed. However, these gaps are widening again for current students.
- The progress of students for whom English is known to be an additional language was better than other students in 2013.
- Over time, the progress made by disabled students and those with special educational needs is inadequate. This is particularly evident in mathematics. The progress of low-attaining students and the most-able at Key Stage 3 is inadequate. Currently, in mathematics, all students underachieve but boys' underachievement is more significant across Key Stage 3. These groups make inadequate progress because teachers do not adapt their teaching and learning activities to meet the needs of their students.
- The progress made by students attending the sixth form has been inadequate over the last four years. Only one group of students in that time has made progress that was broadly average. School data show that the progress of sixth-form students currently on roll is inadequate. Students' needs are not well matched to the courses for which they enrol. Attendance is poor and averages one half day missed per student per week.
- Teachers do not respond effectively to data that shows sixth-form students underachieve as they progress through their course. This contributes to high dropout rates and underachievement. When students attend well and follow appropriate courses they progress well. In recent years there have been some individuals who have been highly successful in the sixth form, and then gone onto prestigious universities.
- Students who receive their education through other providers follow vocational and social development courses. This provision meets their needs well and they make good progress.
- The school provides catch-up sessions to students who join in Year 7 with weaknesses in reading and mathematics. Their improvement is good. However, the development of other students' numeracy skills is not good enough.
- The school's promotion of equality of opportunity is inadequate because of the widespread underachievement by different groups of pupils.
- The school currently uses early entry to examinations to motivate students and to identify weaknesses for further targeted support. Two students who achieved A*s from an early entry to GCSE mathematics are now studying a module of AS level mathematics.

The quality of teaching**is inadequate**

- Too few teachers teach well enough to quickly raise students' achievement across the school. As a result too many students continue to underachieve. There have been recent improvements in the quality of teaching due to some good appointments to the teaching staff and improved professional development for teachers. However, the impact of these improvements has been limited to increasing progress in a narrow range of key subjects in Key Stage 4. Elsewhere, too much teaching remains weak.
- Where teaching is inadequate or requires improvement, teachers do not pay enough attention to the specific needs of students. Nor do they make effective use of data they have on students' progress. Consequently, most teachers will plan a lesson designed for an 'average' member of the group, resulting in too many students not receiving work that matches their needs.
- Teachers are not sufficiently skilled in evaluating how quickly students learn during lessons so they do not adjust their teaching to address misunderstandings nor do they increase the pace of learning when students fully understand. In too many lessons, students are not suitably challenged, the most-able and least-able consistently underachieve and students do not enjoy their learning.
- The recent improvements to the assessment of students' work are having only a limited impact on improving their progress because too few teachers follow the procedure fully and often enough.
- There is some good practice by teaching assistants, but this is not widely spread. Too often teaching assistants will sit with one student throughout the lesson. The student becomes dependant on the support and this inhibits learning. Teaching assistants are not sufficiently involved in the assessment of student's progress and, subsequently, the planning of their learning.
- In one lesson observed the teacher used homework to excellent effect, helping students develop their skills of analysis in preparation for a later class activity. Generally, however, when homework is given it does little to help students improve or enjoy their learning.
- The whole-school initiative to improve students' literacy is at an early stage of development and has yet to have an impact across all subjects. Students read often. Beyond their information and communication technology lessons, students do not get many opportunities to develop their computer skills.
- Where teaching is stronger, teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve and students work well. They respond very positively to tasks where discussion and peer questions help to deepen their understanding. Good questioning by the teacher helps the most-able to explain and justify their ideas, developing their analytical and evaluative skills. These teachers respond to signals from the students and will consequently accelerate learning or give additional, specific support as needs be.
- The majority of teachers are keen to improve. They engage well in discussion about self-improvement and participate well in the increasing opportunities to learn from other professionals.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**are inadequate**

- Attendance has been below average and deteriorating for four years. Attendance this term is worse than the corresponding time period last year. Those responsible for attendance are not aware of the significance of the data they have and the impact poor attendance is having on students' achievement. They do not know which groups of students attend well or poorly, because they do not analyse the data they have.
- Students are not punctual to lessons. Although some distances between classes are long, generally students do not move with a sense of urgency or enthusiasm. Not all teachers provide a good example to students in arriving to lessons on time.
- Students' attitudes to learning require improvement. Occasionally, and due to weak preparation

by some teachers, low-level disruption slows learning. When this happens, students are not fully engaged in their work. The pride students take in their work as demonstrated by the care and attention shown in their books is variable. However, there are some whose presentation skills and accuracy of work are excellent.

- Students' behaviour when moving around the school is good. Students socialise and integrate well. Most are articulate and are confident when talking to adults.
- The rate of exclusions has been above average and had been increasing until this term. The introduction of an inclusion room has been a positive move and reduced the number of exclusions. In addition, teachers can more easily ensure students continue with their learning.
- Younger students and parents raised concerns about the effectiveness of strategies to deal with bullying. Inspectors carried out a survey with a large sample of Year 7 students. Their views on the extent of bullying were inconclusive. However, the survey revealed that students were aware of different forms of bullying and they know how to respond if they have any concerns. Strategies to deal with bullying are effective.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- The leadership and management of the school is inadequate because: underachievement is widespread; there is ineffective teaching across all year groups; attendance is consistently below average; safety deficiencies were not addressed with sufficient urgency; and governors, leaders and teachers do not have the capability to evaluate the impact of their work on the progress students make.
- Governors, leaders, managers and teachers are not demonstrating the capacity to drive the required improvements quickly enough across the school to prevent future underachievement. Recent improvements to students' achievement have been limited to a narrow range of subjects and groups of students.
- Actions taken by the school's leadership have not proved effective in driving improvement in key areas of the school's performance. For example, the targeting of staffing resources on GCSE students in Key Stage 4 to compensate for weak teaching in Key Stage 3 is proving counter-productive as it is having a detrimental effect on achievement in other subjects and year groups.
- Since the last inspection the school has developed systems to monitor the progress of students. This is producing a wealth of data. However, staff are not sufficiently skilled in analysing the data. This is preventing them from evaluating the effectiveness of their work and targeting further improvements.
- School judgements on the quality of teaching are over-generous because observations tend to focus too little on the quality of students' learning.
- Newly-qualified teachers should not be appointed.
- A large proportion of older students are critical of the school because they feel that it does not meet their needs and inspectors agree. Older students say they are not involved in any form of consultation about their school and that recent changes to the structure of the school day have not been good ones. They are complimentary about the work of some teachers, but critical of others.
- Similarly, a significant proportion of parents do not believe the school is well led.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective and meet requirements. Procedures to ensure students safety within the design and technology department have been inadequate until very recently. Leaders across all levels have not dealt with these problems quickly enough. In May and June of this year, two external reports specified deficiencies in safety. No effective action was taken until mid way through the inspection. The governing body and the local authority have been informed.
- The most recent local authority report replicated the school's inaccurate judgements on students' achievement. With no external analysis, the support and challenge provided by the local authority was inadequate. The school has engaged the support of an external consultant who has specified well-targeted areas for improvement.

- Careers guidance is inadequate because too many students in the sixth form start courses which are inappropriate.
- The curriculum at Key Stage 4 has been improved since the last inspection and now better matches the needs and aspirations of a much wider range of students.
- Students' personal and spiritual development is nurtured effectively throughout their schooling. Students' moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Students appreciate the wide range of enrichment activities and after-school clubs.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are fully familiar with how school funding is spent, including additional funding to support students known to be eligible for the pupil premium. However, they do not know well enough how effectively this spending improves students' progress. Their attention has been too narrowly focused on the achievement of Key Stage 4 students. They have not challenged well enough the accuracy of school judgements on students' achievement across the school or the quality of teaching, and so have not been effective in relating performance to salary progression.
 - Governance is weak because they do not hold leaders and managers to account with sufficient rigour.

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	111451
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	426184

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	897
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	125
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	J Coucill
Headteacher	P Lee
Date of previous school inspection	23 November 2011
Telephone number	0151 3552373
Fax number	0151 3557543
Email address	admin@email.epchs.co.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013



