

Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College

Highfield Road, Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 7DW

Inspection dates

23–24 April 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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.

- Students' attainment has risen rapidly in most subjects, including English and mathematics, to broadly average levels, in response to the clear vision and decisive action of the headteacher, strongly supported by the senior leadership team.
- Achievement is good. Students now make good progress as they move through the school. The proportion of students across all year groups making more than the progress expected of them is rising rapidly. This is as a result of good teaching which enables them to make rapid progress.
- Students make up lost ground and the majority are now on track to achieve their targets and many to exceed them. In Years 10 and 11 they achieve at least average GCSE results. In some subjects, such as English and art, their results are above average.
- Behaviour is typically good. Students are keen to do well, have good relationships with their teachers and feel safe in school. Attendance is broadly average and improving.
- The sixth form is good with students making good progress.
- In the very short time the headteacher has been in post, she has acted swiftly and decisively to improve the quality of teaching and to adapt the curriculum to better meet students' needs and aspirations. This had led to significant improvements in teaching and the progress students make.
- The headteacher has won the confidence of staff, parents and students alike. The school's own evaluation of its performance is accurate and is based on a rigorous evaluation of students' achievement, which in turn identifies how the school can improve further. Governors provide a high level of support and challenge to the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In some lessons, opportunities for students to work things out for themselves are too limited. Inaccuracies in spelling and grammar are not always picked up, and poorly presented work is not always challenged.
- The proportion of students gaining the highest grades at GCSE in some subjects is not yet high enough. Opportunities are sometimes missed to extend the learning, particularly of the most able, by providing further challenge.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 45 lessons, of which seven were joint observations with senior leaders. They also checked students' work.
- Inspectors had meetings with leaders, teachers and members of the governing body. They also held discussions with three groups of students from Key Stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form to gather their views.
- Inspectors took account of 127 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire and 38 responses to the optional Ofsted questionnaire for staff, as well as the school's own recent surveys of student and parent views.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documentation including the school's own data relating to students' current achievement, the school's own evaluation of its work and improvement plans and records relating to behaviour and attendance and safeguarding arrangements.

Inspection team

Judith Tolley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Andrew Henderson	Additional Inspector
Rebecca Lawton	Additional Inspector
Pauline Pitman	Additional Inspector
Osama Abdul-Rahim	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average- sized secondary school with a sixth form.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs and requiring extra support through 'school action' is above average.
- A lower than average proportion of students has a statement of special educational needs or extra support because they have been identified as 'school action plus', but this varies from year to year.
- The proportion of students supported through 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 and those children that are looked after.
- The school offers alternative provision for a small number of students within the local network of schools and a small number of students in Years 10 and 11 also have access to some vocational courses provided by the local college.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is outstanding and thus raise standards further and ensure more students reach the highest levels particularly in mathematics and science by:
 - ensuring the most able students are always given an appropriate level of challenge in lessons
 - increasing the opportunities students have to work things out for themselves in lessons and to explain their thinking to others
 - ensuring that students are always given the precise written guidance they need to improve their work and time to respond
 - making sure students' writing is always accurate and presented with care.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 have risen since the last inspection, despite some variation between subjects. The current Year 10 and 11 students are confidently set to improve on the school's 2013 results in the proportion achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics.
- Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average and by the end of Years 10 and 11 the standards students achieved in GCSE examinations were broadly average in most subjects in 2013 examinations, except in mathematics where they were significantly below average. A higher proportion of students are set to achieve A* to C grades in the majority of subjects than in 2013. Standards in mathematics have risen significantly and students now make good progress in most subjects, including in both English and in mathematics, because underperformance has been tackled successfully and teaching has improved.
- In 2013, the gap between the performance of those students who were eligible for free school meals and others was larger than nationally found in English and mathematics although it is closing. Too few of those students made the amount of progress expected of them. Pupil-premium funding has been used well to support a number of actions taken by the school to improve their learning and progress so that the gap in achievement, which was up to two grades in mathematics and English narrowed to one in 2013. The gap continues to narrow rapidly so that students are now making at least the progress expected of them and more students are now set to exceed their targets in both subjects.
- The most able students reached high grades in their English, art and separate science examinations in 2013. In general, however, a below-average number of students reached A* or A grades in many subjects, including in mathematics and double science. Current students' progress indicates that the proportion of students gaining the highest grades is also set to rise across most subjects to closer to the national average.
- The sixth form is good. Students in the sixth form make good progress and most are now on track to reach their targets. Their progress is slowed because of underachievement in the past but they are making up lost ground as a result of good teaching.
- The progress made by disabled students and those who have special educational needs is good, as a result of the one-to-one support they receive in lessons and in the resource unit. This support is very well tailored to their needs and enables them to participate fully in activities in lessons.
- The school has a flexible early entry policy for some GCSE examinations that makes a positive contribution to students' motivation and achievement. The curriculum is well thought-out and meets students' needs and aspirations well. Students following vocational courses at the local college and with other providers also make good progress.
- Support and intervention for students who enter Year 7 with low literacy skills helps them to settle in quickly and make rapid progress, reading and writing is promoted well.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved significantly across most subjects in the short time since the last inspection and has resulted in higher standards and in students making swifter progress.
- Students respond very positively when they are challenged to work things out for themselves. For example, Year 12 students made very swift progress in refining their dance techniques as a result of very clear guidance and the opportunity to work together to evaluate each other's performance. However, sometimes students are not always given the opportunity to develop their ideas or to demonstrate the strategies they have used to arrive at an answer. As a result, some lack confidence in thinking things out for themselves or in sharing their ideas with others and this slows their progress, particularly when they are faced with the demands of AS and A level courses in the sixth form.
- Year 11 students made rapid progress in clarifying and organising their arguments for an essay

about the feelings of the main character in Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge* as a result of having to counter the views of a partner and justify their opinions with close reference to the text.

- Year 7 students made rapid progress in understanding the difference between weather and climate as a result of well-sequenced activities which captured their interest and questioning which challenged their thinking. Similarly, Year 11 students made outstanding progress in understanding how to improve their final compositions in art because of very well chosen themes which inspired them, clear explanations and questioning which increased their confidence. However opportunities are sometimes missed to further challenge the most able pupils.
- The quality of marking is usually good. Students' work is checked regularly and in many cases students enter into a dialogue with the teacher about how to improve their work. However, there remain instances where students are not given precise guidance about how to improve their work or errors in spellings and grammar are left unchecked. Sometimes untidy or poorly presented work is left unchallenged.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students are considerate and behave well as they move around the school between lessons, at break and lunchtime, often in narrow crowded corridors.
- Their behaviour in lessons is typically good. They settle quickly and are usually keen to learn. They take pride in their appearance and usually come well prepared for lessons.
- When working in pairs and small groups students work well together and, when given the opportunity to solve problems, display high levels of concentration and interest and are keen to share their ideas.
- Students have good relationships with each other and with adults. The new behaviour policy initially resulted in a higher-than average incidence of temporary exclusions but this has decreased significantly during the past year.
- As a result of changes made to the school day and the work the school has done with parents, attendance has improved and is now broadly average. There remains a small proportion of students, however, whose attendance is still persistently below average.
- Students say they feel safe and are confident that the school deals promptly and effectively with any rare instances of poor behaviour and bullying. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe.
- The school successfully promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through a wide range of activities within and beyond the daily curriculum on offer. Students are able to engage in sporting, artistic, charitable and other events. In addition, students take on responsibility, for instance, as school counsellors and sixth-form students support younger students with their reading.

The leadership and management are good

- As a result of the decisive action and very clear direction of the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team, standards are rapidly rising and increasing numbers of students are making good progress. Inadequate teaching has been eliminated and the proportion of good and outstanding teaching has increased significantly since the last inspection because senior leaders have been very successful in providing the means to spread best practice across the school.
- The leadership and management at all levels has been very effective in improving the quality and consistency of teaching and learning rapidly across the school, through lesson observations, feedback, coaching and working together as teams to share best practice. Pastoral and academic teams work very effectively together to check progress and ensure individual students are achieving as well as they should and to provide extra support where it is needed.
- Middle leaders' role in checking the progress and behaviour of students has been strengthened and they are now fully accountable for raising achievement through improved teaching and curriculum

opportunities, and through their work with parents and external agencies.

- The school is committed to providing equality of opportunity to all its students. After a dip in results in 2013 the school has adapted its curriculum in order to better meet the needs and aspirations of its students. The positive impact of the extra help for students joining the school in Year 7 with low literacy levels in 'The Greenhouse' and the alternative provision for some students in Key Stages 3 and 4 exemplify this commitment. The extra-curricular activities and educational trips and field courses provided successfully broaden students' experience and interests.
- Partnerships with the local college and other providers help to provide access to appropriate vocational courses for a small number of students in Key Stage 4.
- Parents are kept well informed about the school's work and how best to support their child.
- Staff who responded to the questionnaire are overwhelmingly positive about the way the school is led and managed. Robust systems of performance management have been introduced and set teachers appropriate targets, including students' progress, identify training needs and are linked closely to pay scales.
- Systems for checking the school's performance are rigorous and based on the close monitoring of students' progress. The school's own evaluation of its work is accurate, identifying clearly and concisely what needs to be done to improve further.
- Policies and procedures for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.
- The local authority provides light-touch support for this improving school. The school has been very active in identifying priorities for improvement and in seeking expert help in these areas.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a very good understanding of the strengths of the school and what could be improved. They hold the headteacher to account through a rigorous performance-management process and provide a high level of support and challenge to the senior leadership team. They are very well informed about the quality of teaching and students' progress and are able to ask searching questions. Financial management and monitoring, including the use of pupil premium funding and teachers' pay, is strong and the impact of this is regularly checked.

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	111457
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	442375

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	1,547
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	174
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	James Wilson
Headteacher	Wendy White
Date of previous school inspection	5 December 2012
Telephone number	0151 4242139
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