

St Augustine of Canterbury Catholic High School

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

Inspection dates

21–22 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leadership and management are good, driven by the ambitious and inspirational vision of the headteacher. The tightly-knit senior leadership team shares her relentless focus on improving standards.
- Students' achievement is good. Attainment has risen significantly since 2013 and almost all students now make good progress from their starting points in English and mathematics.
- The school's central focus on improving teaching is at the heart of its vision for the school's improvement. As a result, teaching is typically good, with some that is outstanding.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. Students have many opportunities to reflect on moral and spiritual questions and to become active citizens in the school and wider community.
- Behaviour is good. Students are rightly proud of their school and they conduct themselves well in and around the building. They treat their teachers, fellow students and visitors with respect and courtesy and greatly value their learning.
- The school's work to keep students safe is good. Students know about different kinds of risk, including when using the Internet, and how to keep themselves safe.
- The headteacher and her team are committed to providing for every student the best possible support in order to succeed. Students appreciate the high quality care and support that they receive from the staff.
- Governance is good because governors know the school well. They have a clear view of the school's performance and work well with the headteacher to improve it. They support and challenge the school in equal measure.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not yet enough outstanding teaching to ensure that all the most-able students develop the resilience to attain the highest GCSE results.
- A few teachers do not always check that students have acted upon their advice and guidance on how to improve their work.
- Students' progress has dipped in science and, for a small number of those who have a disability or special educational needs, in mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a wide range of evidence during the inspection, including from observations of teaching, some of these with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, other staff, governors and students. The Lead inspector also met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered key documents, including the school's development plan and self-evaluation, information about students' progress in all subjects, minutes of governors' meetings and reports from the local authority and from other external consultants supporting the school's improvement. Documents relating to safeguarding and behaviour were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors took into account the 25 responses to Ofsted's Parent View online questionnaire.
- Inspectors also analysed the 36 responses to the staff questionnaire provided by Ofsted.

Inspection team

Susan Wareing, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Eileen Mulgrew	Her Majesty's Inspector
Tim Long	Additional Inspector
Osama Abdul Rahim	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- When the school was inspected in October 2013, it was judged to have serious weaknesses. Subsequently, the school was inspected on three occasions. At the last monitoring inspection, the school was judged to be making reasonable progress.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Almost all the students are of White British heritage. Very few students come from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are very few students who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is above the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported by the pupil premium is well 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 who are looked after.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- No students are entered earlier than usual for GCSE examinations.
- The school provides part of the education of a few students at St Helens Pupil Referral Unit, Aspire Training and the Napier Centre.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the quantity of outstanding teaching in the school by:
 - sharply focusing teachers' professional development on moving their teaching from good to outstanding
 - sharing the outstanding practice that exists in the school and drawing more widely on the expertise of outstanding schools further afield
 - ensuring that all teachers check consistently that all students have responded to their advice and guidance.
- Ensure that teaching prepares all students, but especially the most able, to face the most challenging questions in examinations with confidence and resilience, so that they achieve the highest possible results.
- Improve rates of progress in science and for the small proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs who have not made as much progress as others in mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The inspirational headteacher and leaders at all levels have worked tirelessly since the last inspection in 2013 to create a culture in which staff and students alike have high aspirations. Leading by example, the headteacher has galvanised the support of staff, governors, parents, students, the local authority (LA) and others who are working to improve the school. As a result, the school has been able to make the leap in a single year from inadequate overall effectiveness to becoming a good school.
- The headteacher and her tightly-knit senior leadership team have a detailed, accurate and honest grasp of the strengths of the school and what needs to improve. Any underperformance is identified swiftly and pursued relentlessly. Leaders are able to do this through very effective use of information from the school's robust systems for tracking students' progress and teachers' performance.
- While teachers are given every support to improve their practice, senior leaders and governors do not shy away from hard staffing decisions when teachers fail to respond to advice and guidance. The good impact of these systems can be seen in rapid improvements in teaching and in students' significantly improved achievement in 2014.
- The school sets students challenging targets when they join the school. Progress is checked on and reviewed very regularly, so that any students who fall behind receive prompt support and catch up quickly. Almost all students, therefore, make at least the progress expected of them and there is no significant difference between the achievement of different groups of students, save for a small number of those who are disabled or who have special educational needs, in mathematics.
- A few students, for whom a mainstream school has proved unsuitable, are educated at St Helens Pupil Referral Unit, Aspire Training and the Napier Street Inclusion Centre. Their attendance, behaviour and progress are monitored well by the school. They are taught well and acquire useful personal and life skills.
- Parents feel well informed about their children's progress through the reports they receive three times a year. They are quickly informed if any problems arise and the great majority of parents are positive about the school's work.
- Middle leaders, including those in charge of subjects, make a good contribution to students' progress. They have a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses in their departments and work quickly and with determination to put in place additional support for any students at risk of falling behind.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. The two-year Key Stage 3 ensures a strong focus on the key knowledge, skills and understanding students need for learning across the curriculum. The Key Stage 4 curriculum provides a wide range of academic and vocational GCSE courses and an increasing number of students achieve success in the English Baccalaureate. The curriculum is regularly reviewed so that it continues to respond to changing national priorities and to meet the needs and aspirations of all students.
- Departments have adjusted the curriculum to take account of changes to the new National Curriculum and plans are in place for the school's response to the removal of National Curriculum levels.
- Students' strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported through assemblies, Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education (PSHCE) and a rich variety of out-of-school activities such as sports, musical, drama and art activities, reflecting the school's particular emphasis on visual arts.
- Students have a strong sense of right and wrong and a good understanding of the democratic process. They learn about and practise the values of tolerance and respect in their daily lives and older students in particular can relate them to life in modern Britain.
- Through their support for local and international charities and their many links with overseas schools, students are very aware of the inequalities of life in different countries, compared to their own and no discrimination of any kind is tolerated in the school.
- All students benefit from an extensive programme of independent Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG.) They are carefully guided in their options for further study and working life, through individual interviews and presentations from school leaders and outside specialists in careers guidance. The very low numbers of students who do not enter and sustain education, training or employment after Year 11 attests to the positive impact of this guidance.
- The rates of progress for the majority of disabled students and those who have special educational needs are improving. All make progress similar to that of other students in the school in English and almost all also do so in mathematics. Students appreciate the high quality care and support they receive for their academic and personal development through the school's many partnerships with outside agencies.
- The school recognises that for a small group of these students progress was not good enough in mathematics in 2014. Leaders have taken timely and effective steps to raise achievement for this group and similar groups are on track to make significantly better progress in the 2015 results.

- The school has extensive arrangements for ensuring that Year 7 students feel safe and happy when they join the school. These include visits to the school from pupils in Years 4 to 6 for taster days and master classes, as well as specialist teaching from St Augustine staff in their primary schools.
- Students who leave primary school with low levels of literacy receive very effective support. As a result, these students make over a year's progress in reading between the autumn and spring terms of Year 7. Students have many opportunities to read in school, and they generally read fluently and accurately. Breakfast clubs and additional lessons also boost students' progress in English and mathematics.
- The pupil premium funding has been used wisely to support disadvantaged students. The impact of the funding is reflected in the rapid improvement in the attendance of these students, and the steady narrowing of gaps in attainment in English year on year. The achievement of disadvantaged students in mathematics is improving, but gaps are narrowing more slowly. They are poised to narrow significantly in 2015.
- The headteacher and her team are highly respected by the local authority (LA.) The LA has contributed significant resource to the school's rapid improvement, including high quality support to arrest a decline in English in 2013 and to assure the accuracy of the school's judgements about teaching and the assessment of students' progress.
- The school meets the current statutory requirements for safeguarding.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have worked hard and contributed well to the school's improvement. They have been keen to improve their own practice through training and, as a result, they challenge the headteacher and other leaders effectively. Governors are rightly proud of the school. They know how much teaching has improved over the last year and which subjects still need further improvement. They are proud too, of the substantial improvements in students' achievement in 2014 and that the good progress of students currently in the school is being sustained. Governors are vigilant about the use of the pupil premium funding, which ensures that the achievement of most disadvantaged students is similar to that of other students in the school. Governors carefully oversee the performance management of teachers, including the headteacher, and inspection evidence shows that they do not shrink from withholding pay progression from those who fail to meet their targets.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. They conduct themselves well in lessons and move calmly around the school. They wear their uniform smartly and bring the right equipment to lessons. Students respect the school environment; during the inspection, no litter or graffiti were observed in or around the school buildings.
- The great majority of lessons are free from disruption, ensuring that students' progress is therefore good. Occasionally low-level inattention can occur when work is not matched well to the age and interests of students.
- Relationships within the school are very strong. Students are courteous and considerate to each other and to their teachers. They are confident, articulate speakers and at ease with adult visitors.
- Students know about different kinds of bullying, including racist and prejudice-based name-calling, but say that incidences of these are very rare and that a whole range of staff are always available to intervene, on the rare occasions when they occur. School records confirm the rigorous systems in place to ensure that this is the case.
- Attendance is above average. Students arrive on time for school, but occasionally some are late for lessons.
- Both permanent and fixed-term exclusions are extremely rare for all student groups in this highly inclusive school, as a result of the school's robust structures for managing students' behaviour.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Students, parents and staff all agree that students are kept safe at school.
- Students are well aware of the different kinds of danger they face, for example when conducting experiments in science. There is a clear focus on how to stay safe while using the Internet, particularly social media.
- Students who receive part of their education off site attend and behave well. They are looked after well

and kept safe while on other premises.

- There is rigorous checking of the identity of visitors to the school and staff undergo strict vetting procedures.

The quality of teaching

is good

- High quality teaching is at the heart of the school's vision for its improvement. Consequently, teaching has improved rapidly, so that the great majority is now typically good or better over time. The school is tackling the few remaining pockets of teaching that are not good rigorously through a proven system of personal action plans and coaching.
- The improvements in teaching have speeded up the pace of students' learning and increased the proportions of students gaining five GCSE grades at A* to C, including English and mathematics, in the 2014 examinations. Rates of progress have improved particularly strongly in English, a previously underperforming subject, and mathematics has seen steady year-on-year improvement in the progress of most students.
- Teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour and the effort they should put into their work. This has led to students' positive attitudes to learning and their good progress in lessons.
- Teachers' questioning is a strength, used well to check frequently on students' understanding and to deepen their thinking about challenging concepts.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use a wide range of resources and strategies to engage and maintain students' interest. For example, during a very purposeful Year 11 history activity, groups of students had to reconstruct a Cold War cartoon from memory and interpret its meaning, prior to discussion. The learning was fun and students consolidated their understanding well, making thoughtful parallels with current world events.
- Teachers assess students' learning and progress regularly and use the information they have about students' progress to set work at the right level. They ensure that students are clear about the progress they have made and what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers mark work, including homework, regularly and conscientiously, but sometimes fail to check that students have taken action on their advice and guidance.
- Teachers think carefully about the way they teach and take full advantage of the carefully designed, high quality training that they receive to work on areas where they need to develop their practice. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved significantly and continues to do so.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students join the school with prior attainment that is slightly below national averages and often with significant weaknesses in reading, writing and mathematics. Over their time in school, they make good progress from their starting points and achieve well in their GCSE examinations.
- In 2014, 59% of students achieved five grades at A* to C, including English and mathematics. These results are above national averages and are a significant improvement on results in 2013. No students are entered early for GCSE examinations.
- Students attained well in their best eight subjects and in English, where their performance was significantly higher than the national average. Attainment in mathematics also improved, but dipped in sciences.
- Progress in English and mathematics was significantly below the national average in 2013. It rose above it in 2014. The school's reliable information on students' progress indicates that GCSE results in 2015 will show further increases in rates of progress.
- There is no significant difference between the rates of progress made by different groups of students in the school. The gap between the proportion of boys and girls gaining five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is narrower than the national average.
- The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is broadly similar to that of others in the school, save for a very small number of students in mathematics. The school's timely actions ensure that the achievement of similar groups of students is likely to rise significantly in 2015.
- The most-able students achieve well. In 2014, 95% of these students achieved at least five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics. This is higher than the national average. The progress of the most-able students is broadly in line with similar students nationally.
- While the proportion of GCSE passes at grades A to A* is increasing, some of the most-able students lack

the resilience to persevere with the most challenging work when they are unsupported in examinations. This sometimes inhibits their achievement at the highest grades.

- The very few students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve at least as well as their peers do. In 2014 their progress was significantly above average.
- Good quality support provided to those who arrive in Year 7 with below expected levels in English and mathematics enables most of them to catch up by the end of the year.
- The performance of disadvantaged students in the school is improving in English. The gap between this group in the school and non-disadvantaged students nationally in English has reduced from a grade and a quarter in 2013 to half a grade in 2014. In mathematics, the gap has increased from a grade and a half to a grade and three quarters. The English gap is set to halve in English in 2015 and reduce by a grade and a quarter in mathematics.

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	104833
Local authority	St. Helens
Inspection number	454728

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	610
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Davies
Headteacher	Linda Mousdale
Date of previous school inspection	8 October 2013
Telephone number	01744 678112
Fax number	01744 678113
Email address	staugustines@sthelens.org.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 and 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 2014

