

Notre Dame Catholic College

Great Homer Street, Liverpool, L5 5AF

Inspection dates

24–25 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- In all years and subjects in the main school, students are making good progress from their starting points.
- The school has quickly resolved the significant staffing issues in some departments over the last 18 months. This action has minimised the impact on students and the school has retained its high expectations and drive for improvement.
- Teaching is now stable across all departments, and teachers build good relationships with students, which enable them to ensure students' good progress over time.
- Students' behaviour is excellent. All students are well-mannered, polite and confident learners. They are well cared for and have many rich experiences and opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills exceptionally well.
- The headteacher's drive and ambition for the school have inspired leaders at all levels to secure improvements to teaching, learning and progress. The whole school community is committed to students' success and this is having a positive impact on all aspects of the school's work.
- Governors are well informed, highly effective and ensure the resources available to the school and to students are of the best possible quality. They have managed finances particularly efficiently and are challenging the school to maintain its spiritual ethos, as well as its academic quality, equally well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teachers consistently use all the information they have on students' attainment and progress to inform their plans for lessons and teaching.
- Teachers do not consistently ensure that presentation is good in all subjects and not all correct spelling and punctuation well enough. Some students, therefore, continue to make errors.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Although teaching is generally good, leaders are not using robust information about students to ensure consistent achievement across subjects or good attendance in the sixth form.
- Due to the staffing issues over the last year, progress for some students was not as fast as normal. This means achievement has reduced for some groups of students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the curriculum. Three joint observations were undertaken with the senior leaders of the school. Inspectors also visited registration and an assembly.
- The 50 responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account.
- The large number of responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire were also analysed.
- Inspectors scrutinised a large number of documents provided by the school. These included plans for improvement, policies and action plans, the school’s view of how well it is doing and records of students’ attainment and progress. Records were seen from the monitoring of teaching and learning and the work with training and development advisors. Logs of behaviour, attendance, bullying and case studies of students’ well-being and safeguarding were also seen.
- Inspectors scrutinised documents relating to the alternative provision used by the school, including attendance, monitoring and the progress of students off-site. An inspector also contacted the provision by telephone.
- A large number of samples of students’ work were seen within lessons. In addition, specific work from all years, including the sixth form, with a particular emphasis on writing, was scrutinised.
- Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, representatives from the local authority school improvement service and members of the governing body.

Inspection team

Rebecca Lawton, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kathleen Harris	Additional Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Additional Inspector
Clive Hurren	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Notre Dame is a smaller than average size secondary school with a sixth form.
- The school site is shared with the city-wide music service, which is also managed by the school.
- The proportion of students who are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium is above average at two-thirds of the school population. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The majority of students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or who have special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- The school started to accept boys into Year 7 in 2012, on a rolling programme of becoming co-educational. Currently, all Key Stage 3 is now mixed. However, Key Stage 4 has girls only and the sixth form has girls and a small number of boys.
- The school uses two alternative providers, the New Heights pupil referral unit and the Alt Valley Skills Centre.
- Since the previous inspection, 29 staff have left the school and 21 new appointments have been made. Several roles have changed due to a staffing restructure and the school has moved to a new building.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching and thereby improve achievement by:
 - ensuring all staff use the full range of information they have on students' performance to refine and plan lessons to meet their needs
 - ensuring teachers have consistently high expectations of standards of presentation in all subjects
 - ensuring all teachers correct spelling, punctuation and grammar in all subjects.
- Improve the rigour of leadership of the sixth form and thereby raise students' achievement by:
 - improving students' attendance in the sixth form
 - improving the monitoring of teaching and learning in the sixth form to minimise variability across subjects and groups.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The school has a strong and experienced leadership team, all of whom are committed to improvements and to upholding the school's spiritual and moral ethos. This community spirit has ensured the highest standards of behaviour and social development for all students.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's performance, are ambitious to continue improvements and have high expectations for all students.
- In 2014, the school was surprised by disappointing results in mathematics at GCSE. Several contributing factors, including staff and student absence had been tackled quickly by the school, but the impact on outcomes remained for this cohort of Year 11 students. The school has since secured consistently good teaching in mathematics and has put in place a significant amount of relevant training with the result that teachers' assessments of students' performance are now robust.
- Middle leaders are well trained and have successfully secured improvements in their departments and areas of responsibility. They are keen to continue improvements and are robust in their monitoring of the quality of provision for which they are responsible.
- Pupil premium funding is well managed, spent efficiently, and is closing the gaps in achievement in literacy and numeracy between disadvantaged students and their non-disadvantaged peers. Although gaps in attainment widened in 2014 due to disappointing results in mathematics, current information shows the gaps in both progress and attainment are closing within the school.
- The curriculum is well matched to student's needs, and the school is monitoring the impact of its provision for the new intake of boys. It is amending this provision in order to meet their interests and aspirations more closely. The curriculum prepares students well for life in modern Britain and teaches the rule of law, democracy, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs through its religious education lessons, assemblies and the wide range of visiting speakers and trips. School leaders are committed to equality of opportunity and are continuously reviewing the curriculum and tracking the progress of all groups to ensure all receive the very best support.
- The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities for all students which meet their interests and expand their experiences well. These are well attended and enrich students' skills and talents.
- The school meets statutory requirements for safeguarding and child protection. Safeguarding training is frequent and of very good quality.
- Alternative provision on other sites is managed well, and students' attendance, behaviour and achievement are all monitored closely. The provision is regularly checked and those students who attend are cared for well.
- The local authority and school improvement service have supported the school well in tackling specific issues in mathematics and ensuring all teachers are adapting their teaching to the new curriculum requirements well. Standards are checked by external consultants and assessments agreed so that the school can be confident in the accuracy of all its judgements on the quality of teaching and learning.
- The leadership of the sixth form requires improvement as procedures, records and monitoring of teaching and learning are not as robust in the sixth form as in the rest of the school.
- The guidance students receive on choosing careers and information on choices for the next steps of their education or employment is clear and delivered through whole class and individual meetings. Students say they feel well prepared to make informed choices, and the supporting documents show good quality information is given to both students and parents. Some flexibility in the curriculum is available for students to change their minds and, although some do not continue through to A Level, a wide range of alternatives are available to these students.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is experienced, highly skilled and has high expectations of the school and its staff. Governors have linked performance to pay and are using this effectively to improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement. Governors know the school well and are well trained in the use of data. As a result, they are able to challenge the school's leadership continuously to improve further and they check progress against national data.
 - Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and have managed finances closely to ensure that funding and resources have been available to tackle issues when they have arisen. There have been significant financial pressures for the school, and these have been managed exceptionally well.
 - All leaders are held to account for their areas of responsibility and the careful tracking of progress towards agreed targets has been successful in improving provision.

- Governors are well informed of all aspects of school life and support the school's spiritual, moral, social, cultural and academic work equally well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Students are keen to learn and persevere with challenging tasks. They are able to sustain their concentration for long periods and ask questions to ensure their own understanding and deepen their knowledge.
- Some students who have particular behavioural needs are well supported by a strong pastoral team. The school knows all students well and is able to be flexible to meet students' needs as they arise. A large body of additional school staff, including a police officer, social worker, psychologist and school nurse work together with teaching and leadership staff to make sure all students' well-being is supported. Case studies show this teamwork is particularly effective.
- Around the school students are kind and thoughtful, well-mannered and polite. They share, are considerate and make friends easily. Movement around school is calm and orderly, and students make an effort to welcome newcomers and visitors. Students are proud of their school.
- The number of behavioural incidents has reduced markedly, and students say behaviour in lessons is helpful to their learning. Leaders have a clear policy, and this has ensured that behaviour is managed closely, but that the warm atmosphere and spiritual ethos is maintained. Leaders and teachers say that the lack of low-level disruption has been helpful when improving the speed of progress in lessons.
- Students say that there are few incidents of bullying, and logs show very few incidents each year. Students know how to report any issues that may occur and are confident that staff would deal with it quickly. Students like their teachers and the school leaders and good working relationships are central to the school's ethos and culture.
- Attendance has been steadily increasing and is now almost at the national average. The school is working exceptionally hard to improve attendance for all students, but especially those who are most vulnerable. There are dedicated staff to monitor and work with parents and families, and even a minibus that collects some students in times of need.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- All provision is very well monitored, and the school has most effective and efficient systems to ensure checks are robust and regular.
- The school site is very well maintained, and there were no litter, graffiti or unsafe behaviour seen during the inspection.
- The school's work to safeguard students includes regular work with a wide range of agencies, so that any students in need have access to the very best support as quickly as possible. Case studies show this has been particularly effective in ensuring vulnerable students are safe and cared for very well.
- The very good quality training in safeguarding, child protection and the regular routines and policies ensure that all students are safe at all times. Students say they feel safe, and are able to describe how to stay safe online and how to manage their own safety well.
- The curriculum is rich and broad, and gives students the ability to discuss any aspects of safety they desire with experienced staff and professionals in law, social work and other agencies. A regular programme of review ensures safety is an ongoing priority and training is continuously refreshed.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching in all departments is good and improving. A new system for sharing good practice is starting to have a positive impact in all areas, as teachers gain new insights and are becoming more consistent in their approaches to, for example, marking and feedback.
- Resources are of good quality and students appreciate the time and effort teachers put into preparing their lessons. However, not all subjects are using the information the school has on students' ability or educational need to refine these plans so as to best support students in all lessons.
- New approaches in mathematics and science, promoting students' active problem-solving and

investigation skills are having a particularly good impact on their progress. Teachers are using real-life examples and enabling students to take risks, to try, fail and try again. This approach is building resilience, independent thought and creativity well, and students are making rapid improvements.

- As the teaching in some departments was interrupted by significant changes to staffing, such as in mathematics, the progress students made last year slowed for some groups. Teachers and additional staff are working hard to accelerate progress for these students so as to close the gaps and return achievement to expected levels. This has been successful so far, although not all gaps are yet fully closed and not all students are yet back to where they were originally targeted to be.
- Bespoke literacy and numeracy interventions, designed to meet the needs of students at different stages of learning, for example to boost reading on entry to school in Year 7, or to help students move from a grade D to a C in mathematics are used effectively to support small groups and individuals with particular needs. These students say they are pleased with the quality of teaching they receive, and the tracking of their achievement shows that these interventions work well and improve their progress.
- Teachers do not always demand the highest standards of presentation from all students in all subjects. In some cases, for example, when drawing diagrams or graphs this limits the progress students can make, or the marks they can receive in an examination. Not all teachers correct key errors such as capital letters for the date or correct spellings of key words in topics. This means that in some cases students repeat errors.
- Students read well and often, and students and parents are appreciative of the library that the school hosts on site. Reading is supported well across the curriculum.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is particularly strong and the school supports teachers in keeping up to date, attending training and working with a wide range of experts to ensure skills are continually refreshed. For example, artists come into school to work with teachers and students, local university links are well established and the school shares a site with the city-wide music service, so students have regular access to top quality musical experiences.
- Those students with disabilities or special educational needs have good quality teaching both within and outside the classroom. Individual programmes of support to meet their needs are established, and these students make good progress from their starting points and, in some cases, exceed expectations.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students start the school with levels of attainment that are generally below average. By the time they leave school, the proportion gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C have been improving over time, although in 2014 the results in mathematics dipped.
- Standards in mathematics have improved, and school tracking and inspection evidence show progress in all years is much stronger. The school has worked with a number of mathematics experts and professionals to ensure accuracy of assessment, and to secure improvement for all groups.
- Students supported by the pupil premium funding are the majority group in the school, at two-thirds of its population. Since the previous inspection, this group has been steadily closing the gap between their progress and attainment and that of non-disadvantaged students nationally, until the dip in mathematics in 2014. This GCSE cohort was more than a grade behind non-disadvantaged students nationally in mathematics, although only roughly half a grade behind in English in 2014. The in-school gap in attainment between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged was small in all subjects, less than a grade. Current in-school tracking shows the gaps are once again closing and that 2014 was unusual rather than a trend. There is a small gap of less than a term between the progress of pupil premium and non pupil premium pupils in school, and this is closing over time.
- The most able students in the school are making good progress, although the proportion exceeding expected progress is lower than that found nationally. In lessons and through the scrutiny of students' work during the inspection, it is apparent that these students are regularly challenged to reach the higher levels of which they are capable. There is no use of early entry for examinations.
- Students who are disabled or who have special educational needs are making good progress from their starting points. One-to-one and small group interventions, work with teaching assistants and specialist support staff ensure that these students make good progress in all areas of the curriculum.
- Those students who attend off-site alternative provision make good progress, and have their learning and progress monitored closely by the school.
- The school has worked hard to continue to improve the progress and achievement of all groups of pupils, and to ensure equity of outcomes. Despite the dip in 2014 in mathematics and the relatively lower science attainment that year, progress in these subjects within school has been improved, and other subjects have maintained their trends of improvement. For example, standards in English have improved consistently for

the past three years.

- The school is maintaining some subjects, despite very small cohort sizes, in anticipation of the larger, mixed gender year groups yet to come. As a result, small numbers make comparisons for some subjects unhelpful.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- Behaviour in the sixth form requires improvement, because attendance is much lower than the national average for sixth form institutions. Although students are well prepared for life in modern Britain and have opportunities for enrichment and good curriculum provision, when they are absent they are not benefitting from this provision as much as they could.
- In lessons, students are motivated and work hard. They are making steady progress in the majority of subjects, although outcomes vary significantly between vocational and academic subjects, from AS to A-level and from year to year. The levels of attainment that students have when they begin these programmes of study varies significantly, and this has a direct impact on the final grades they reach and the qualification routes they are advised to take. Achievement in some subjects and in some year groups requires improvement.
- Leadership of the sixth form requires improvement, as the tracking and monitoring of progress are not as robust as in the main school and data is not being used as effectively. Action plans and reviews of progress are not based on the rich information that the school uses in other key stages to inform plans for improvement.
- The curriculum in the sixth form is good and students are well supported to make choices appropriate to their needs. The school has won awards for the quality of its information, support and guidance given to students, which are highly effective.
- The school runs some courses with very small numbers specifically for the benefit of students, so as to ensure all have the opportunity to reach their potential, even when these courses are not currently financially viable. The school uses funding effectively to make sure all courses are maintained and staffing is available for all student needs. These small class sizes, although they enable individualised support, do limit the amount of group work and discussion that can take place.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and good relationships with students, which they use to encourage independence and creative thought and to prepare students well for life and work. However, information about students' progress is not always used as well as it could be and this means that, in some subjects, students do not achieve as well as they might.
- Students say they appreciate their teachers support and feel well prepared by the time they leave. The majority go on to higher education.

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	104706
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	456142

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	853
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	225
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Thomas Alfred Westwell
Headteacher	Frances Harrison
Date of previous school inspection	16 January 2012
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