

Sacred Heart Catholic College

Liverpool Road, Crosby, Liverpool, Merseyside, L23 5TF

Inspection dates 21–22 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors promote high expectations for all students. Leaders are strongly improving teaching and, as a result, most students now achieve well. There is a whole-hearted commitment to improvement.
- Governors are given detailed information by school leaders and use it to check carefully all aspects of school performance.
- A large majority of students make good progress from Years 7 to 11, including in English and mathematics, and reach above-average standards.
- Teaching is good overall with improved attention to students fully understanding more complex topics.
- Students with disabilities and those who have special educational needs achieve well. Their progress is closely monitored by the members of staff responsible and they receive the support they need.
- Pupil premium funding is used well and any gaps in achievement and attainment between those students supported by it and others are rapidly closing.
- The most able students are now being challenged more effectively with an increasing proportion on track to attain the highest GCSE grades.
- Students are very positive about their school. They enjoy the broad range of opportunities that the curriculum provides and students encourage each other to do well. Their behaviour is good.
- The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural developments well. The school provides ample opportunities for students to experience a broad and broadening education.
- Students are well cared for and feel safe at all times.
- Parents and staff are strongly supportive of the school and are right to be confident that it is an improving one in which students learn well.
- The sixth form is well led and students attend regularly and achieve well over time.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although the proportions of students making more than expected progress in mathematics are increasing, they are not yet high enough.
- Some teaching, particularly in modern languages, requires improvement because it does not consistently challenge students to achieve as highly as possible.
- Teachers do not always check fully on the understanding of students and fail to adjust teaching in response so that the highest rates of progress are made. Marking is not always of a consistently high standard.
- A small minority of students are not consistently attentive and they achieve less well than they should.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 33 different lessons. A number were conducted jointly with school leaders. Inspectors also visited a range of other school activities such as registration periods.
- Inspectors looked at students' work when it was convenient to do so during lessons and also conducted a more formal examination of it in which they were joined by two subject leaders.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of records and documents during the inspection. These included the school's data for the progress being made by students and the minutes of full governing body and committee meetings. Records covering behaviour, attendance and safeguarding were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors held meetings with students of all ages as well as taking the opportunity to speak with them during the school day.
- A meeting was held with five governors including the Chair of the Governing Body and members of key committees, one of which was that responsible for students' standards.
- Meetings were held with representatives of the local authority and of the archdiocese.
- Inspectors met with members of staff holding a wide range of roles, including leaders of the sixth form, subject leaders and those responsible for students requiring extra support.
- Inspectors considered 262 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View), as well as taking account of a much larger survey made by the school.
- Inspectors evaluated the 58 responses made by members of the school staff to the Ofsted questionnaire.

Inspection team

Paul Copping, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Marcia Harding	Additional Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Additional Inspector
Judith Tolley	Additional Inspector
Elizabeth Haddock	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much larger than average-sized secondary school.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage. A very small minority speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students, those supported through the pupil premium funding is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding to support those students known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- In 2014, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- The school has received support from the local authority and has worked with two partner schools and in a local cluster of schools.
- The school makes use of two providers of alternative provision: Impact and Pinefield. The number of students attending these providers is very small.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that teaching in Years 7 to 11 and the sixth form is never less than consistently good, and more is outstanding so that more students make more than expected progress, particularly in modern languages by:
 - ensuring that teachers have consistently high expectations for what students can achieve and that appropriately challenging work is planned for all students
 - ensuring that all teachers check on the understanding of students fully and adjust teaching in response so that the highest level of progress is made
 - ensuring that lessons are stimulating and engaging, providing challenging learning activities, including for the most able students
 - encouraging the highest levels of student involvement, reducing opportunities for students to become distracted
 - ensuring that all marking is of the same, high standard, guiding students precisely in how best to improve their work, and is sufficiently frequent for lapses in students' performance to be promptly corrected.
- Ensure the proportion of students making better than expected progress by the end of Year 11 in mathematics increases by further developing mathematical problem-solving and investigative work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher responded with determination to the judgement of 'requires improvement' at the last inspection. He has embarked on a vigorous programme of improvement, which has effected significant improvement to the quality of teaching and therefore students' achievement.
- Senior leaders are equally ambitious for continued improvement. They have ensured that the collection of information about students' progress has become more frequent and more accurate. Interventions to counter any under-achievement by students are now made more promptly.
- Middle leaders now play a more prominent role than previously. Several are recently in post and have brought new vigour to subject areas for which they are responsible. They play a key role in providing sharper monitoring of the quality of teaching and have raised expectations in their departments.
- Very small number of students attend programmes run by other establishments. School leaders monitor students' progress, behaviour and attendance closely.
- Close checks are made on the impact of teaching on the progress made by students. On this basis, the headteacher is able, accurately, to make decisions about the movement of teachers up the salary scale. Equally, the school draws on this information to make informed decisions about the training needs of members of staff.
- The school has clearly identified its key areas for development. Priorities such as improving the quality of marking have been vigorously pursued and decisive action was taken to effect changes in subject leadership where progress was slow to improve. Weak achievement in design and technology was tackled robustly. The dip in achievement in mathematics in 2014 was predicted and decisive action taken to improve subject leadership. Performance is significantly improved.
- Pupil premium and Year 7 'catch-up' funding are used effectively. The difference in performance between disadvantaged students and their fellow students has been small for some time and the gap continues to close.
- A broad range of subjects is available to students and vocational options in the sixth form are being expanded. The school takes its prominent role in both its faith community and the wider community very seriously and is preparing students well for life in modern Britain both via its curriculum subjects and a wider cultural programme of visits. The visit made by sixth formers to a mosque had been highly appreciated by students.
- Careers education and advice provides effective guidance for students. Information offered is impartial and helps them to make sensible choices. For students not to be in education, work or training after Year 11, is extremely rare.
- The school provides access to a broad range of cultural and sporting activities that add to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural experience. The emphasis on charitable work is strong and there is a focus on appreciating contrasting beliefs and cultures that underpins the school's work to counter intolerance and to promote good community relations. The school works effectively to promote equality of opportunity, good relations and to tackle discrimination.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and are effective.
- Parents have a high opinion of the school. The school's own survey of parental views embraced a large majority of families and showed a very high level of satisfaction.
- The local authority has provided a high level of effective support since the last inspection and has been an integral part of the process of improvement. It has provided frequent, detailed reviews of the school's work.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The work of the governing body is good. Governors responded to the outcome of the previous inspection vigorously. They understood the absolute necessity of improving teaching in order to raise achievement. They closely monitor school performance and are well informed about the improvement initiatives of the senior leadership team such as the drive to raise the achievement of the most able students. They have ensured that key information, including school performance data, is made available to them regularly and in sufficient detail to allow them to hold school leaders fully to account. They are equally attentive to students' progress, attendance and behaviour.
 - Financial control by governors has been an important factor in the improvement the school's budgetary position, allowing key improvements such as reducing the size of classes in Year 11. Governors are fully involved in determining the allocation of additional funding such as that for the pupil premium and the Year 7 'catch-up' grant. They check that funding is used effectively.
 - Governors annually review the performance of the headteacher supported by appropriate professional

advice. Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching. They have an overview of the targets set for teachers and support senior leaders in ensuring that any salary increases given reflect success in improving student achievement.

- The governing body has distributed responsibilities so that all key aspects of the school receive scrutiny, including close attention being given to the quality of safeguarding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students are orderly and well behaved as they move between lessons or at social times. Students of all ages walk between the two school sites, very visible to the local community, in a way that reflects well on the school. Students were keen to share their work with the inspectors and were unfailingly welcoming to their visitors.
- Instances of bullying and racist incidents are rare. Students said that members of staff dealt quickly and effectively with any problems and meticulously check afterwards to ensure that issues are fully resolved. Students behave well about the building; interventions by adults are rare because habits of good conduct are routine for students. The building, its facilities and its equipment are respected and there is no graffiti or litter.
- Older students take their role in helping junior members of the school seriously. They model good behaviour through their work in mentoring Year 7 readers and in other responsibility roles about the school.
- Attendance is improving and is above the national average.
- The behaviour of students on alternative programmes is good. Behaviour is carefully monitored by effective liaison between the school and the alternative providers.
- In a small minority of lessons, students are slack in their attentiveness and behaviour drops below its general good level, having an adverse effect on progress. This only occurs where teaching does not provide sufficient challenge to students at all levels. Equally, failures fully to respond to teachers' marking and suggestions for improvement occur rarely: typically, where monitoring had not been sufficiently frequent.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Adults with direct responsibility for the safety of students are properly trained, a number to higher levels, so that each of the two school sites can always draw on good-quality advice in responding to any situation. Liaison with other agencies is effective.
- The personal, health and social education programme of the school is reflected across all subjects. Students confirmed that their school had addressed key aspects of personal safety and they had had useful guidance towards assessing risk, in general and online.
- Disabled students or students with special educational needs are fully included in the school community and their needs are carefully attended to.
- The school works closely with its alternative providers to ensure that the very small numbers who attend are safe.
- Governors make all necessary checks on the quality of the school's work in keeping students safe. They visit frequently and have the necessary knowledge to verify school procedures.
- A large majority of parents believe their children to be safe and happy in school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved rapidly since the previous inspection and achievement has been raised. Students learn well in almost all subjects. The school's prioritisation of extending the challenge for the most able students has deepened students' understanding and problem-solving skills across all subjects. Although this innovation is not applied with absolute consistency, a large majority of teachers are making effective use of this programme. Not only does this strategy require students to be more reflective and to think more deeply, it also provides a means for teachers to assess students' progress in a more sophisticated way.

- Teachers build effectively on the keenness and readiness to learn of the large majority of students, to create a productive climate in their classrooms. The increasingly central role played by providing more challenging tasks helps teachers to encourage more sophisticated responses from students.
- In modern languages, progress is hindered by low expectations. Students' interest and motivation are not sustained and progress is slow because tasks set are insufficiently challenging.
- Improved expectations have been embedded with regard to the quantity of work and quality of presentation. The proportion of students engaging in a dialogue with their teacher about the improvement of their work is rapidly increasing and improvement was evident in the course of the current academic year. However, some teachers do not mark students' work frequently enough, which allows some careless work to go unchecked for too long.
- The teaching of writing, reading and mathematical skills across all subjects is good. In many different situations, students demonstrate well developed reading skills. Students' books show that an awareness of different writing styles develops at a good pace. Skills in mathematics are sufficiently developed to provide a secure basis for work in other subjects, although problem-solving and investigation were not prominent with absolute consistency, so placing some limits on the level of challenge provided. Progress accelerates where an emphasis on increasing the problem-solving expected of students is evident.
- Since the last inspection, teachers have been specifically coached in providing higher levels of challenge to their students, particularly the most able. Whilst this programme has meant that students' needs are more consistently met, there remains some teaching that is insufficiently demanding. Occasionally, students at different levels in their achievement are all required to work through the same tasks in ascending order of difficulty from low starting points. The most able are obliged to move through stages that they have long left behind. This is time wasted for them.
- In a minority of lessons, teachers do not check students' understanding frequently or carefully enough. Failing to do so slows progress because no account is taken of whether students require further work to secure understanding or would be better served by moving on quickly, before engagement slackens, because concepts have already been thoroughly grasped. Marking is rapidly improving but there remains a small proportion that does not offer students clear guidance on how to improve their work.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students typically start Year 7 with attainment above the national average. Progress has been accelerated since the last inspection and the proportion that not only achieves above national averages in attaining five or more good GCSE but make the better than expected progress is rapidly increasing. The improvement is not entirely consistent. Current progress in modern languages has slowed.
- In the 2014 end of year examinations, the proportions of students making expected and more than expected progress in English were in line with national averages. In the current year, students are on track for significantly improved performance. This is underpinned by a strong reading culture in the school and the extent to which students respond positively to requirements for extended writing.
- Achievement overall in mathematics in 2014 was lower than in previous years but was in line with national averages. Too many students did no better than match the minimum expectations for them. In the current year, progress is much improved because of better teaching.
- Students make very strong progress and achieve well in a range of subjects including English, history, information technology and music. Due to good support, disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve well. The proportion making expected progress in English increased sharply between 2013 and 2014 and this continues to rise.
- In the past, the achievement of the most able students has not been good enough. Current data indicates strong improvement with achievement now good.
- School leaders make balanced decisions for the small number of students who are entered for GCSE examinations early. There is no negative impact on student achievement from this decision, including for the most able.
- In English and mathematics, gaps in attainment between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students are closing rapidly. In 2014, disadvantaged students were a grade below other students in the school and half a grade below students nationally. For current students, attainment gaps are closing rapidly for both English and mathematics.
- The gaps in progress between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students are also closing rapidly when comparing progress made with other students within the school and all students nationally.
- Students at a risk of falling behind are identified promptly on entry to the school. A programme of

academic coaching provides intensive support and ensures that these students make accelerated progress.

The sixth form provision

is good

- In 2014, there was under-achievement in the sixth form, particularly in Year 12. A small number of students missed their target grades and there was a small but concerning number who failed their courses in psychology, business and enterprise, mathematics and science.
- School leaders have been vigorous in tackling these issues and data indicates that a large majority of students in the current Year 12 (as well as those in Year 13) are on track to meet their targets. These targets have been adjusted in the current year to provide a high degree of challenge, with school leaders adding a grade to previous predictions for GCSE outcomes. With the support of a comprehensive mentoring system, students are meeting this enhanced level of challenge and, therefore, exceeding expected progress. There is a high rate in the completion of courses. In 2014, some subjects, including psychology and the humanities, were below national averages but current data indicates higher levels for this year.
- Sixth-form students are clear that success in examinations requires the best attendance, and it is high. Attitudes to learning are positive and behaviour and safety are good.
- The sixth form is currently well led. Students are accurately advised so that their choice of subjects can lead them into ambitious choices of career such as medicine or the law. Decisive actions have been taken, including the improvement of subject leadership where student outcomes have been unsatisfactory. Intensive mentoring is readily available to students who require extra support. Behaviour and safety are closely monitored effectively.
- Teaching is good. Typical of sixth-form work was the very high quantity of detailed writing in Year 13 history. Students are rigorous in supporting argument with evidence and discussion that is well informed and sophisticated.
- Sixth formers take their role as senior members of the student community seriously and help Year 7 students with their reading. In their general demeanour and conduct, they model positive attitudes for younger students.
- Students lacking a Grade C in English or mathematics when they begin Year 12 can follow programmes to remedy that and success rates are improving.
- Students are proud of their school and feel they have a significant voice in the community that reflects their senior status.

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	104961
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	462307

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	1,360
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	290
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Louise Fraser
Headteacher	Ian Walker
Date of previous school inspection	23 April 2013
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