

St Cecilia's RC High School

Chapel Hill, Longridge, Preston PR3 2XA

Inspection dates 12–13 January 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Standards and achievement at St Cecilia's have improved in the last two years, particularly in English and mathematics. Pupils also achieve well in history and sports studies.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils is good and is similar to other pupils in the school.
- Pupils benefit from good or better teaching in most lessons.
- Pupils behave well around the school and are keen to do well. The school provides many opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and pupils engage enthusiastically in these.
- The new headteacher has provided renewed focus and energy to build on the improvements made in the last two years.
- Senior leaders provide training for staff that is highly effective in developing the quality of their teaching. Teachers are sharing good practice both within the school and collaborating with colleagues from other schools.
- Leaders ensure pupils are well cared for.
- The governing body knows the school very well. It has played a considerable part in supporting the school to improve standards.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils have not made enough progress in science, design technology, geography, information technology and modern languages.
- Teaching in some lessons does not challenge pupils to encourage them to do their best.
- Some pupils do not follow up on their teachers' suggestions for improvement.
- The school's information about how pupils are achieving is not always used precisely enough in some subjects. This means that some work is not closely matched to their abilities.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Senior leaders need to improve the quality of teaching, particularly in science, modern languages, design technology, information technology and geography so that pupils reach the same standards as other subjects by ensuring that all teachers:
 - use information about pupils' achievement to provide them with work which challenges them to do their best
 - develop their use of effective questioning to probe and deepen pupils' understanding
 - give pupils more opportunities and enough time to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher joined the school in April 2015 after a period of considerable change. He has won the trust of colleagues and they are inspired to continue to improve standards. He has restructured roles so that everyone is clear about what is expected of them. He has made new appointments in science and modern languages, which have had an impact on standards in a short space of time. He has ensured that there are regular checks on the quality of teaching and put in place appropriate support where standards are not good enough. Staff say they welcome the clarity about expectations and are happy to have regular conversations about their work.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching. The leadership of teaching is now purposeful and staff speak highly of the professional development opportunities which are structured, frequent and meet their needs. Where teaching requires improvement, teachers are provided with comprehensive support and training. Leaders challenge underperformance robustly and link pay progression closely to both pupils' achievement and teachers' professional development.
- Middle leaders are an increasingly strong and coherent group and work well with senior leaders to ensure that the quality of teaching continues to improve. They welcome the new opportunities for professional development and are committed to contributing to the school's professional development programme. Most subjects are well led. Those areas which are underperforming receive appropriate support to improve outcomes for pupils in these subjects.
- The headteacher and leader with responsibility for teaching and learning have created productive links with other local schools and networks. These are helping staff to reflect on and improve their teaching. Leaders have also established strong links with local primary schools. There are now a number of projects linking with the primary schools, which means that there is a shared understanding of pupils' achievement. The school is also supporting local primary schools to develop provision in modern languages.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is broad and balanced and successfully prepares pupils for life in modern Britain. The number of pupils achieving an English Baccalaureate qualification is increasing. The development of pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding is underpinned by the school's Christian ethos. Its mission statement 'respect is the foundation of all relationships' is evident in the way everyone at the school treats one another. There is an active school council and pupils explore British values such as the rule of law and democracy through the curriculum and enrichment days.
- The school's chaplaincy is a strength of the school. It provides opportunities for pupils to lead aspects of worship and to contribute to the pastoral care of all in the school. Pupils grow in confidence through contributing to this aspect of school life.
- The wider curriculum opportunities are extensive and pupil participation is high. Pupils take part in a range of sport including football, netball and climbing. The school provides pupils with the chance to be involved in the national citizen service and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Music plays a significant role in the life of the school. Inspectors heard the choir and orchestra making an outstanding contribution to the school's weekly mass. Pupils were very keen to share their enjoyment of music and the considerable opportunities they have to play instruments and compose their own work.
- Most teachers follow the school's marking policy and provide high-quality marking and feedback. In these cases, feedback is precise and tells pupils what they need to do to improve their work. This was evident in some mathematics, design and technology, music and physical education lessons where pupils were expected to reflect on and make corrections to their work. It was evident that not all pupils are doing this, however, and some teachers are willing to accept this. Consequently, where teachers were not following the school's marking policy their comments do not always help pupils to produce work of a higher standard. This is particularly the case for some boys.
- The support provided to disadvantaged pupils, and to disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, is effective. Outcomes for these pupils have improved because their needs are being closely tracked and leaders use associated funding, resources and strategies effectively.
- Pupils in Year 7 who receive additional funding to catch up to the expected level receive strong additional support through small-group numeracy and literacy sessions. Literacy support is also provided to other year groups. Pupils themselves were highly enthusiastic about how these sessions have helped them improve.
- The progress and attendance of students who attend off-site provision are monitored carefully by the school.
- The local authority and the diocese have provided determined and focused support which has played a significant part in securing improved standards in the school.

- The school's work to keep pupils safe is systematic and well managed. Staff are trained in the identification and reporting of risk. The most vulnerable pupils receive close support and the school's liaison with other agencies is effective.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance is highly effective. It has supported the school through the changes in leadership since the last inspection. Drawing on their wide educational experience and backgrounds, governors have supported the school with wisdom and purpose. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas in need of further development. They ask insightful questions about the information provided by the school. They provide a skillful balance of purpose and support in practical ways such as mentoring, and provision of wider opportunities for staff development.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Most teaching is good and some is outstanding. Positive, respectful relationships between staff and pupils make a contribution to the learning and as a result pupils in most lessons make good progress. Teachers know their pupils exceptionally well, and have high expectations. This builds pupils' confidence and self-esteem.
- Where teachers address misconceptions and check regularly that pupils understand what they are learning, there are higher levels of achievement. In these lessons, pupils are encouraged to discuss and debate and as a result their learning is deeper. For example, in a mathematics lesson the teacher used questions which encouraged pupils to give clear reasons for their answers and in a music lesson the teacher skilfully questioned pupils so that they could expand and explain their answers using technical vocabulary.
- When, as happens in the majority of cases, teachers plan lessons that stimulate and engage their pupils, pupils' attitudes to learning and application to their studies are very good. However, in a minority of lessons teaching does not motivate pupils sufficiently to enable them to make the best possible progress. In these lessons, teachers do not check well enough whether pupils understand their work.
- In the majority of cases, the most-able pupils are being challenged to achieve high standards, and consequently they are making good progress. This was seen in a history lesson where pupils were expected to explain their ideas about the League of Nations. However, inspectors did observe a few occasions in lessons where the most-able pupils could have been stretched further.
- Pupils have the opportunity to read widely. In a catch-up intervention group, pupils read to the inspector with confidence and shared their enjoyment of reading both in the school and at a home.
- Pupils are set homework on a regular basis but it is not always used to consolidate the learning in the classroom. This means that pupils do not always have the chance to deepen their learning. The school is in the process of rewriting its homework policy to make sure that pupils make additional gains in their learning.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is invariably good. This means that teachers can help pupils to learn well and to ensure that lessons are interesting and enjoyable. However, not all teaching encourages pupils to do their best and when this happens they lose concentration.
- Where learning is weaker, teaching does not challenge or involve all pupils. Learning is not always checked carefully enough to make sure that all pupils are ready to move on to new work, or on to more challenging learning. Sometimes pupils do not produce good-quality work because they are unclear about how to do so.
- Teaching assistants are effective in supporting those pupils who need additional help with their work.
- Teachers challenge stereotypes and the use of derogatory language in lessons and around the school. They are quick to tackle inappropriate language and promote equality of opportunity and diversity in teaching and learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils value the friendly, welcoming atmosphere of the school. Prefects take their responsibilities seriously and make a good contribution to school life.
- Pupils say that bullying, including homophobic name-calling, is very rare and that their teachers take swift

action to let them know that this is unacceptable.

- Pupils know how to stay safe and are taught how to use the internet responsibly. They understand how to keep themselves healthy, both emotionally and physically.
- Pupils show respect for others' ideas and views. Good examples of this were seen in a number of lessons including physical education and geography where pupils were encouraged to critique one another's ideas in a constructive and respectful way.
- Pupils value the opportunities to take part in wider aspects of school life such as their involvement in the school chaplaincy. These opportunities develop their self-confidence and sense of responsibility.
- Support for pupils' welfare and well-being, including with any mental health issues, is effective. Pupils are confident that they feel safe in school and that they are well-cared-for. They have a good understanding of the potential dangers of mobile technologies, social media and the internet.
- The quality of advice and guidance is good. It is closely tailored to the needs and aspirations of pupils and is successful in promoting a wide range of opportunities and future pathways.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Leaders are firm about the expected standards of behaviour. The behaviour policy is well understood by pupils and used consistently by staff in the majority of classrooms.
- Pupils respect their school, their uniform and each other. They say there are clear expectations for behaviour and hard work. They look after the school site and there is very little litter in rooms, corridors and open spaces. Canteen staff praised the good conduct and attitudes of pupils at the school.
- Poor behaviour is unusual, and few pupils are excluded from school. Although pupils feel that disruption to learning is very rare, they say that in a few lessons pupils chatting or turning around slows learning.
- Throughout the inspection, pupils were polite and courteous. They were keen to share their views with inspectors and did so in an articulate and thoughtful way.
- The majority of parents and staff agree that behaviour is good.
- A small number of pupils are referred to the inclusion room where they are helped to re-engage quickly in learning. The careful use of this provision has resulted in fewer exclusions. Some pupils said that staff helped them to improve their attitudes to learning through the support of this provision.
- Overall attendance is broadly average, and persistent absence is below average. The actions taken by leaders to improve attendance have been particularly successful in reducing the absence of disadvantaged pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Outcomes for pupils have risen steadily and are now good. Pupils start at the school with attainment slightly below the national average. The proportion of Year 11 pupils attaining five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, is in line with other pupils nationally. Pupils achieve especially well in English, mathematics, history and sports studies. During their time at the school their progress exceeds that of other pupils nationally in a number of subject including English, mathematics and history.
- As a result of the improved quality of teaching, pupils are progressing well across Key Stage 3. The work in pupils' books and the school's information on pupils' outcomes indicate that they now make consistently good progress across most subjects.
- At Key Stage 4, some pupils have gaps in their learning as a result of historic weaker teaching. In particular, this is evident in science, modern languages, design technology, geography and information technology. The quality of leadership and teaching in science and modern languages is now effective and pupils are now making better progress. Inspectors saw evidence of this in science lessons, for example, where pupils were working hard and purposefully. The quality of teaching is improving in geography.
- Pupils work hard and want to do well in all their subjects. Most take pride in their work and many read well and write confidently and convincingly at length. Much teaching ensures a consistent focus on pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar. Pupils are expected to present their work neatly, although some boys do not take enough care in ensuring that their work is always the best they can do.
- The most-able pupils are challenged well in most subjects. Pupils enjoy thinking deeply about their learning and being challenged to consider more complex work. An increasing proportion of pupils are achieving the higher grades at GCSE and the numbers successfully achieving the English Baccalaureate are rising.
- Disadvantaged pupils, those entitled to extra funding, achieve very well and make similar good progress to

their peers. They benefit from high-quality teaching, based on high expectations for what they can achieve. These pupils receive effective extra support, when necessary, to develop their academic, as well as social and emotional, skills. Teachers know each pupil well and ensure that they receive appropriate, individualised support and guidance.

- Additional staffing within the special needs department has ensured more effective support is in place for pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs. As a result, they are making good progress. In particular, the development of pupils' key literacy skills, including reading, is impressive. Pupils rapidly gain the skills needed to be successful in their learning.
- Pupils talk enthusiastically about their enjoyment of reading. They regularly visit the school library in English lessons and read both at school and for pleasure at home.
- The transition arrangements for pupils entering Year 7 are effective. A senior leader works closely with the feeder primary schools' staff, parents and pupils to ensure a comprehensive knowledge of each pupil exists. Year 7 pupils told inspectors that they were very confident when they joined the school.
- Pupils' achievements in English and mathematics combined with impartial careers guidance mean that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. The impact is that no pupils leave the school without places in education, employment or training. Some pupils shared their ambitious aspirations with inspectors.

School details

Unique reference number	119800
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10002255

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	374
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Flynn
Headteacher	Ivan Catlow
Telephone number	01772 783074
Website	www.st-cecilias.lancs.sch.uk
Email address	info@st-cecilias.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–3 October 2013

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection there have been two interim headteachers. The substantive headteacher was appointed in April 2015.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium, is average. (The pupil premium is additional government funding to support those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.)
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and few are at the early stages of learning English.
- The school receives support from Lancashire local authority and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Salford.
- One student attends the Larches House School in Preston.
- The school meets the governments' floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 31 lessons, of which five were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also carried out a work scrutiny jointly with the headteacher and a senior leader.
- Inspectors met with two groups of pupils, listened to a group of pupils reading and talked to others informally during breaktimes.
- Discussions were held with staff, including senior and middle leaders. A meeting was held with the local authority school improvement partner. A separate telephone conversation was held with the diocesan education adviser.
- Inspectors took account of the 71 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and of the questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included information on the school's own view of its performance; achievement, behaviour and attendance information; the minutes of the governing body meetings and a range of policies.

Inspection team

Mary Myatt, Lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Philip Hyman	Ofsted Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Ofsted Inspector

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