

St Mary's Catholic High School

Royal Avenue, Leyland, Lancashire PR25 1BS

Inspection dates 21–22 June 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	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher's transformational leadership has brought about institutional change.
- The culture of the school has shifted to a pupil-centred, harmonious, equitable haven for learning.
- Progress at key stage 3 and in Year 10 is good. Outcomes will improve for this year's Year 11.
- Teaching is good. Weak teaching has been addressed swiftly and sensitively.
- Due to the diligence and persistence of the deputy headteacher, robust assessment systems are in place.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They are smart, polite and well behaved. Any minor interruptions to learning are dealt with quickly and fairly.
- Disadvantaged pupils benefit from very strategic leadership. Not only has their attendance and achievement improved, but so has their well-being, through leaders listening directly to their views.
- There is a very talented and well-balanced senior leadership team whose desire to help the pupils they serve is tangible.
- The chair of governors, through his steadfast determination, sets the highest expectations.
- The entire governing body, with their extensive expertise, have been pivotal in bringing about rapid and sustainable change.
- There is very good capacity for further improvement; self-evaluation is searingly honest, school improvement planning is sharp and succinct. Every aspect of school life has improved.
- Performance management is transparent and well managed. All staff know what they are aiming for and are well supported to achieve it.
- Safeguarding is effective. Much care and attention is paid to individual needs by the highly skilled pastoral team. Any concerns are followed up in a timely manner and good use is made of external agencies to support pupils' well-being.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teaching sufficiently stretches the most able pupils so they do not achieve as well as they could.
- Pupils do not always get the help they need with reading and writing across the curriculum.
- Some teachers do not follow the school's marking policy to ensure that pupils' work improves.
- Achievement in mathematics is not as good as in English.
- Middle leaders do not hold their departments to account as rigorously as they might.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in mathematics and for the most able pupils.
- Continue to improve teaching by:
 - ensuring that there is an appropriate level of challenge in lessons, particularly for the most able pupils
 - checking that all marking consistently follows the school's marking policy
 - supporting pupils consistently well with reading and writing across the curriculum.
- Develop the role of middle leaders to monitor and challenge their departments more rigorously.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher and his deputies have brought about rapid and sustained change. Robust systems are in place to quality assure teaching and learning and to track the progress of all groups of pupils.
- The senior leadership team have won the support of staff through hard work and practising what they preach. There is great respect for the new members of the senior leadership team whose work has improved the lives of so many pupils.
- The leadership and management of teaching and learning is characterised by abundant energy, drive and enthusiasm to make learning engaging, inclusive and relevant. Teaching has improved beyond recognition since the previous inspection.
- The leadership and management of behaviour and attendance are strong. Expectations are higher, teachers are stricter and interruptions to learning are greatly reduced due to regular, supportive monitoring of lessons. Pupils feel they have been listened to and value greatly the new lunchtime queueing system which they feel is much fairer.
- The school is unrecognisable from the previous inspection report. In the past two years there have been unprecedented challenges. Leaders and governors have rebuilt the school while robustly tackling a great deal of teaching that was not good enough. As a result, standards of achievement, teaching, behaviour and attendance have improved.
- Pupil premium funding is used intelligently and creatively; gaps in achievement and attendance are narrowing.
- The curriculum has been redesigned to take account of necessary reductions to staffing. The focus is on delivering the best-quality curriculum to enable pupils to make the very best progress. The curriculum is enriched by many sporting, creative and cultural opportunities for pupils.
- There is a strong focus on personal safety through a new assembly programme; pupils now have a secure understanding of the kind of language and behaviour that is acceptable.
- Middle leaders have been strengthened and, as a result of relevant professional development, they monitor standards across their departments and readily share ideas and challenges with each other. However, there is more that this group can do by taking a leading role in the quality assurance of teachers' work and monitoring standards in greater depth.
- The local authority and archdiocese have worked together to provide well-focused and highly effective support. Their swift intervention since the previous inspection secured highly credible and self-assured leadership to rapidly improve the school. They will continue to support the school by sharing best practice and quality assuring the school's judgements.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The commitment, dedication and vision of the governing body are commendable. It is easy to forget that they are volunteers. They genuinely and deeply care about the pupils they serve. They listen to pupils. They are extremely knowledgeable about standards across the school and are open and honest about areas they know still need some work.
 - The chair of governors has led the governing body with conviction through very challenging times, and continues to address a significant budget deficit in a sensible way to have the least impact on pupils' experience.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders and governors give safeguarding a high profile. Great care is taken to support pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Appropriate child protection procedures are in place and staff are well trained to deal with any issues of concern.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching is typically good. Teaching is strongest in subjects such as physical education (PE), geography, English, science and modern foreign languages. There is still a small body of teaching that is not consistently good and there is either support in place or staff are leaving in a few weeks.
- Standards of teaching are consistently high in PE. Inspectors observed the school's sports day. Pupils and teachers were engrossed in athletics, expertly commentated on by the head of PE. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural education was promoted well as pupils encouraged each other and were proud to show off their sporting prowess. There was a clear understanding of common purpose: 'we want to do well'.
- In a Year 10 sociology lesson pupils discussed factors that have the greatest influence on academic achievement. They considered socio-economic factors, ethnicity and gender, among other things. They

showed excellent subject knowledge and had sustained, reasoned discussions. Behaviour was excellent as they took responsibility for their own learning due to the teacher's diligent planning.

- In a Year 9 geography lesson pupils worked hard to identify whether or not individuals were tourists. Pupils took great pride in their well-presented work and were keen to study geography at GCSE level. The teacher used probing questions and ensured that pupils could independently analyse resources and give reasons for their conclusions. There was good attention to literacy and pupils absorbed more challenging questions with ease. Unsurprisingly, pupils behaved impeccably.
- There are some excellent examples of assessment, for example in English, yet not all teachers consistently assess work according to the school's marking policy.
- Teaching in mathematics is not as consistently good as it is in other subjects. There is a lack of urgency in some lessons and in others expectations are too low. Although work on literacy has had a big impact in some areas there are still lessons where pupils are not challenged to write with technical accuracy.
- In a minority of lessons observed there was insufficient challenge for the most able pupils; this is because a small pocket of teachers still underestimate what pupils are capable of.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. All pupils spoken to by inspectors say that they feel safe in school.
- Pupils report that bullying, derogatory language and any form of prejudice or discrimination are rare. Inspectors agree.
- The pastoral team offer a suite of services to help pupils who are vulnerable in any way. Pupils speak highly of the mentoring and counselling, and generally feel 'looked after' by the very caring pastoral team.
- Pupils are not allowed to use mobile phones in school; they know why and respect the rule. Inspectors observed a hard-hitting assembly led by Lancashire Constabulary emphasising that pupils do not know who they are chatting to online and the risk of online grooming leading to exploitation.
- Senior leaders and governors regularly and formally listen to pupils. They are stakeholders in the continued success of their school. They are consulted, where appropriate, on issues affecting them and leaders are confident enough to change their rules when they feel the pupil body has a valid point. For example, pupils are delighted with the new queuing system in the canteen which ensures that every year group has their turn to go first at lunchtime.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils look extremely smart in their uniforms and are rightly proud of their school. Pupils behave well in lessons and at social times. Staff are easily identifiable on the schoolyard as they wear high-visibility vests. Pupils report that this helps them feel safe in school.
- Pupils say and inspectors agree that low-level disruption to learning is uncommon. Behaviour in lessons has improved significantly due to a renewed ethos of togetherness and a positive learning culture. This, alongside regular monitoring by senior leaders, ensures that pupils can be certain that any negative behaviour will be checked.
- Leaders know exactly where the 'hot-spots' are for behaviour and, in their highly professional way, support colleagues who are new to the school to quickly build positive relationships. Fixed-term exclusions have reduced and are now below national averages.
- Pupils are keen to speak about their school and are proud to say that they would recommend it to their friends. The role of prefects has been developed and they join staff on duty at lunchtimes.
- Attendance is above the national average overall and it is improving quickly for disadvantaged pupils. The suite of interventions funded by pupil premium money is having a strong impact.
- The use of supply staff has been reduced as new staff take up posts. Pupils welcome this stability after so much time has been spent in temporary accommodation.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Pupils are making good progress in key stage 3 and in Year 10. Year 11 has experienced significant and unavoidable disruption to their learning; this has had a negative impact on their progress. Consequently, although results are set to improve this year, they will not reflect pupils' full potential.
- Progress is particularly strong in subjects such as English, PE, modern foreign languages, geography and single sciences due to high-quality teaching and plenty of stretch and challenge.

- Gaps between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and their peers are closing across the school. This is due to strategic leadership rapidly removing barriers to learning, and special provision has been made to suit their individual needs. Pupils say that this has made a huge difference to their attitudes to learning and well-being.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities are doing much better in lessons thanks to some excellent support from teaching assistants and strong leadership. The special educational needs coordinator is highly skilled and knowledgeable. She directly monitors the progress pupils are making in class and offers her expert support for teachers who are less skilled at supporting pupils' learning needs. Consequently, gaps in the achievement of these pupils and their peers are closing.
- However, the most able pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable. This is because, historically, the curriculum restricted their progress by use of early entrance to exams. These legacy decisions will still affect this year's results for Year 11 pupils. Also, expectations for this group are still not high enough in a small minority of lessons because teachers underestimate pupils' abilities.
- The proportion of pupils making expected progress in mathematics is broadly average but it could be higher. This is due to some inconsistencies in teaching within mathematics. Leaders and managers are aware of this and are supporting pupils effectively to achieve more challenging targets.
- Pupils display strong oracy skills in many lessons and the library is very well used to accelerate reading. However, there is a missed opportunity when many pupils are in school early to entice them to read in the very well-resourced library.

School details

Unique reference number	119816
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10013064

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	544
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Lumb
Headteacher	Mr Philip Mooney
Telephone number	01772 421 909
Website	www.lsmchs.com
Email address	head@lsmchs.com
Date of previous inspection	7–8 October 2014

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized school. In September 2013 the school was burnt down by an arson attack. Until September 2015 the school was housed in temporary accommodation on the existing site.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government to support pupils eligible for free school meals and children looked after.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language is low.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- The school website meets requirements.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils in lessons and during social times. They scrutinised documentation pertaining to current achievement, self-evaluation, performance management and school improvement. They looked at minutes of governing body meetings, financial information, current attendance and behaviour information and documentation relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors held discussions with approximately 100 pupils, members of the governing body, the chaplain, senior leaders and middle leaders. They took account of 41 responses to the school's parent questionnaire.

Inspection team

Sally Kenyon, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jonathan Jones	Her Majesty's Inspector
Christine Wake	Ofsted Inspector
John Edwards	Ofsted Inspector

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