

# Holy Family Catholic High School

Virgins Lane, Thornton, Liverpool, Merseyside L23 4UL

**Inspection dates** 7–8 February 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders' use of key monitoring information sometimes lacks clarity and rigour. The school's internal tracking information does not present a convincing picture of improving progress in some subjects and in some year groups.
- Tracking information suggests that pupils in mathematics, especially disadvantaged pupils, will not achieve as well as they should in 2017.
- The quality of teaching and learning in mathematics and science is too variable and does not ensure that pupils make consistently strong progress in these subjects.
- The difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils in school remains too wide in some subjects.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is low, it lags behind that of other pupils in the school and is falling.
- Persistent absence has increased significantly this year. The persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils is much higher than that of other pupils in the school and nationally.
- Exclusions rates have risen this year, largely as a result of some poor behaviour in Year 7.

#### The school has the following strengths

- The leadership of the headteacher is strong. He has gradually built up parental confidence and Holy Family is now heavily over-subscribed.
- The school has steadily improved its attainment over the past three years. As a result, greater proportions of pupils left the school in 2016 with good GCSE grades in English and mathematics.
- In the last two years, the school has taken in a large number of pupils from a local school which closed. These pupils have settled in well at Holy Family and most are making good progress.
- The school's pastoral care of its pupils and students is strong. Pupils are safe and are well looked after. They are respectful, tolerant and generally well-behaved.
- The sixth form is good. Students make increasingly good progress from their starting points because teaching is more effective. Many go on to university.
- The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective.
- Governance is strong. Governors support the school effectively and hold leaders firmly to account.



# **Full report**

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for pupils, by:
  - taking further steps to improve teaching and learning in mathematics and science
  - taking further steps to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in all subjects.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, by:
  - improving the use of key monitoring information, and the methods by which attainment and progress are measured, especially for pupil tracking and attendance data
  - enhancing the rigour with which leaders at all levels analyse monitoring information, to ensure that analysis always takes account of how well different pupil groups are performing.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, by:
  - reducing persistent absence quickly
  - taking all necessary measures to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils
  - taking steps to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions.



# **Inspection judgements**

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

Good

- The headteacher's leadership is strong. He knows the school, the pupils and the community well. Under his tenure, parental confidence in the school and its provision has steadily increased. As a result, the school has increased its pupil numbers significantly, is now very popular and is heavily over-subscribed.
- In September 2015, the school took a significant number of pupils into Years 10 and 11 from a neighbouring school which closed. It is a tribute to the effectiveness of leaders and teachers at Holy Family that these pupils have settled very well into their new school, despite the turmoil of moving schools and of their old school closing. Those new pupils who spoke to inspectors were complimentary about the support that they have received. Existing pupils at the school have welcomed their new peers, whose arrival has caused little disruption to the routines of the school or to its positive ethos.
- Leaders have steadily improved pupils' attainment over the past three years, with the result that the proportion of pupils leaving the school in 2016 with good GCSE grades in English and mathematics was higher than the national average.
- The headteacher and his team of senior leaders ensure that subject leaders are held robustly to account for the performance of their departments. Where change is needed to be made to department leadership in order to improve performance, senior leaders have not hesitated to take action. As a result of these changes, inspectors noted positive improvements in the quality of leadership and teaching in humanities, which had previously been a subject causing concern.
- Senior leaders have established a series of professional development opportunities, including training middle leaders to improve their leadership skills and capabilities. The school can evidence the impact of this work, for example, in improved levels of accountability.
- The leadership of teaching is good. There is a strong programme of professional development which is helping teachers to improve their teaching, for example in art and humanities. Senior leaders have also supported non-specialist teachers in mathematics, enabling them to teach the subject more effectively. However, more remains to be done to ensure that mathematics teaching overall is as effective as it needs to be.
- The school's performance management arrangements are rigorous. Leaders and governors ensure that staff are robustly held to account for their performance. Where performance does not meet expected standards, leaders withhold pay increases. There is no complacency among leaders and governors.
- Leaders have identified the main barriers to learning that are preventing disadvantaged pupils from making faster progress. The school uses its pupil premium funding appropriately to address these difficulties. However, its impact on raising achievement for disadvantaged pupils last year was variable. The school can, however, evidence the positive effects that Year 7 catch-up funding has had on improving pupils' literacy and numeracy.
- The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced. The school regularly reviews it to



ensure that it meets pupils' needs. Leaders seek to prepare pupils appropriately for life in modern Britain and have maintained a broad range of option choices, including vocational subjects. The percentage of pupils taking the academic routes expected in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) has improved over the last two years and in 2016 was above the national average. The school encourages pupils who have a facility for language learning to study two foreign languages, where this is appropriate. There is a strong emphasis on British values and the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is good.

- The school offers its pupils a range of extra-curricular activities, including charity work, skiing, a range of musical activities, sports clubs and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Pupils welcome and enjoy these activities, which enrich learning.
- Like many other schools, the school is in the process of revising the systems used to track pupils' progress. Unfortunately, because of a change of systems for measuring progress in mathematics half way through this academic year, tracking information given to inspectors showed that pupils in mathematics appear to be making much less progress now than they were doing during the autumn term. Leaders argued that raising their internal grade boundaries to match new national expectations had had the effect of reducing pupils' scores, but they were unable to demonstrate that pupils were, nonetheless, continuing to make the progress they should. Inspectors judge that pupils are not making consistently good progress in mathematics or science.
- Similarly, some of the other tracking information that inspectors scrutinised contained unusually wide fluctuations in progress figures between the autumn and spring data collections. Inspectors were not confident that current systems for tracking pupils' progress were accurate enough.
- Attendance data also lacked clarity and leaders' management of it lacked sharpness. Leaders have only recently begun to analyse attendance figures by different groups.

#### **Governance of the school**

- Governance is strong.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They hold leaders and managers firmly to account and ask challenging questions about pupils' progress. They ensure that performance management arrangements are rigorous and do not grant pay rises to staff when their performance does not merit this.
- Governors support the school wherever they can. Through their work as 'link governors', they have developed an understanding of the needs of departments and of the progress pupils are making across the curriculum.
- Governors have a good knowledge of the school's finances. They check that additional funding such as the pupil premium is used appropriately and ensure that the school remains financially solvent.



### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and meet statutory requirements.
- The school's safeguarding policies and practices are strong. The school actively promotes a culture of vigilance where pupils' safety and welfare are paramount.
- The school has rigorous checking procedures in place for child protection. All staff have been trained in safeguarding and child protection and they know what to do if a child is at risk. Referrals to outside agencies meet requirements and concerns are followed up meticulously by school staff. Staff have had training on 'Prevent', the government's programme for preventing radicalisation and extremism.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, for example through e-safety initiatives, although some pupils who met with inspectors did not know about the dangers of sexting. The school has filters in place to prevent inappropriate internet usage.
- Governors are suitably trained in safeguarding and in the safe recruitment of new staff.
- The school works effectively with parents and external agencies to keep pupils secure and safe from harm.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Requires improvement** 

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent and does not ensure that pupils make consistently good progress. Evidence from pupils' books confirms a similar picture of variable teaching quality over time.
- Teaching seen in mathematics was not good enough overall to enable pupils to make strong progress. Teachers' questioning in some lessons lacked depth and did not fully develop pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts. In a Year 9 class of relatively low ability, pupils were confused by the teaching, became disengaged and lacked the resilience to succeed. High ability pupils in other classes were offered challenging work but some failed to move beyond straightforward, lower-level tasks. Work in some pupils' books, including those of higher ability, sometimes lacked quality and care.
- Inspectors found similar variation in science teaching, both in activities observed and over time. Pupils engaged well with some interesting, investigative activities in some lessons, but in others there was a lack of challenge. In a Year 12 physics lesson, for example, students had simply copied large chunks of notes. Inspectors saw examples of pupils' science work over time which was not completed to a high enough standard. Inspectors noticed that some teachers' scientific knowledge was not entirely accurate and that this was hampering pupils' understanding and slowing their progress.
- Most teachers are following the school's marking and feedback policy, which encourages pupils to respond to feedback in order to move learning on. However, this is not yet consistent across the curriculum. Inspectors found a number of examples where teachers had not addressed literacy errors in pupils' work.
- There is effective teaching, which enables pupils to make good progress in some subjects. In English, for example, most teachers are setting pupils high levels of challenge. Teachers have responded well to the exacting demands of the new GCSE



examinations and are preparing pupils well for these. Inspectors saw lots of examples in pupils' books of positive, refined, extended writing, showing good levels of understanding of literary texts, including in key stage 3. Teachers' feedback to pupils on their work is particularly strong in English.

- Inspectors saw other examples of strong teaching which was promoting pupils' good progress effectively, for example, in religious education, drama, history and modern foreign languages.
- The teaching of humanities was a concern for senior leaders previously, as outcomes had been poor for some time. Leaders took firm action last year to support and challenge staff. As a result, teaching is improving in both history and geography.
- The teaching of modern foreign languages is a strength. Teachers regularly used the foreign language throughout their lessons as the normal means of communication with pupils. This was challenging, but pupils were clearly used to this positive approach, as all coped well with the demands this made on their understanding.
- The school encourages pupils to read widely, for example, through regular silent reading sessions in form time and a dedicated reading period built into the key stage 3 curriculum.
- Teachers largely manage pupils' behaviour well. In the majority of lessons visited, pupils worked hard and showed positive attitudes to learning. Relationships between teachers and pupils were strong in the great majority of lessons.

### Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement** 

#### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school has a supportive and caring ethos in which most pupils thrive. Pupils feel safe in school, and they know how to stay safe. They told inspectors that there is little bullying and that staff usually deal with it effectively when it arises. Pupils said that that there is little racism or homophobic bullying.
- The great majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey or via freetext are very happy with the strong pastoral care that the school offers their children. Parents spoke of teachers who really know and care for the pupils and who go out of their way to welcome and assimilate newcomers. Inspectors themselves can testify to the quality of this care, which was seen in the successful integration of the pupils who arrived last year from the local school that closed.
- Pupils wear their uniform smartly and are courteous and respectful.
- A very small number of pupils now attend alternative provision so that their specific needs can be better met. The school monitors their behaviour and attendance carefully. Pupils are making the progress expected of them.
- The school is successfully promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Inspectors observed an interesting assembly about homelessness. Pupils learn suitably about British values in a range of subjects, such as religious education and history, as well as through their personal, social, health and economic (PSHE)



education lessons.

■ Pupils are provided with objective advice, information and guidance regarding their future careers.

#### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- In 2015, the percentage of pupils receiving a fixed-term exclusion was higher than the national average, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The number of fixed-term exclusions has increased this term. School figures show that the principal cause of this is fighting by a small number of Year 7 pupils.
- Overall attendance is close to the national average, but persistent absence has increased significantly this year and is too high. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is lower than the average for other pupils and is falling, and figures show that the persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils is much higher than the national average. The school has not calculated attendance with reference to national averages and some of the attendance data that leaders gave to inspectors lacked clarity initially. Leaders have only recently begun to analyse attendance figures by different groups.
- Most pupils behaved well in lessons observed by inspectors and showed good attitudes to learning. The great majority of pupils lived up to the high expectations their teachers have of good conduct. Pupils generally arrive at lessons willing and ready to learn. However, younger pupils told inspectors that some of their lessons are disrupted by pupils shouting out and inspectors did observe a little low-level disruption in a small number of lessons.
- The behaviour of pupils as they went around the school site, at break and lunch times and between lessons, was good during the inspection. The school was calm and orderly and staff managed behaviour unobtrusively.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

**Requires improvement** 

- The school has been successful in raising pupils' attainment over the last three years, so that higher percentages of pupils have left with good grades in GCSE English and mathematics. However, in 2016, pupils' progress, as measured by the new Progress 8 national standards, was average. The Year 11 cohort which left in 2016 entered school with prior attainment that was slightly higher than the national average. Thus, pupils arrived with average attainment and made average progress between Years 7 and 11.
- In 2016, disadvantaged pupils made much less progress than their non-disadvantaged peers nationally in mathematics, EBacc subjects overall and humanities. In mathematics and humanities, the achievement of disadvantaged pupils was in the bottom 10% of schools nationally.
- In 2016, low ability boys also performed poorly in English, mathematics and EBacc.
- The school's tracking data for current cohorts of pupils shows wide fluctuations, especially between English and mathematics. In Year 11, the latest tracking



information showed that pupils in mathematics are making slower progress than they were doing in autumn. Inspectors' evidence from teaching and from pupils' books showed that pupils were not making the progress they should in mathematics.

- In Year 10, in contrast, all groups appear to have made rapid progress in English. The level of challenge in English teaching has been significantly enhanced and teachers' assessment of pupils' work indicates that their expectations have risen in the light of demanding new examination requirements. In Year 9, it is the progress made by pupils in mathematics which appears anomalous, as pupils in all groups have made exceptional levels of progress between autumn and spring data collections. Inspectors did not find enough evidence of high quality teaching in mathematics which would explain this improvement.
- Leaders said that they had improved their Progress 8 score last year from a relatively low baseline at this stage of the year to the final figure which was marginally above national average. Leaders expect pupils to make at least the same level of progress this year between spring and the final examinations. However, given the fluctuations in English and mathematics information, inspectors were not confident that the school's latest tracking information is accurate.
- Disadvantaged pupils in Year 11 are not making progress comparable with that of their peers. For example, the difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in mathematics and that of their non-disadvantaged peers in schools has widened since the autumn term.
- Inspectors recognised that the large cohorts of pupils 'transferred in' from the local school which closed have made a difference to the make-up of the school. As a result of the transfers, the percentage of disadvantaged pupils rose, for example. Although Holy Family has settled the new pupils in very well, without disruption to its routines or deterioration in behaviour and ethos, there remains a discrepancy in estimated Progress 8 figures for the new cohort in Year 11. These pupils currently lag behind the pupils who have been at Holy Family since Year 7 by an average of half a grade across eight subjects. Inspectors were satisfied that the school is doing all it can to boost the achievement of these pupils.
- Although leaders say that all pupils are set challenging and aspirational targets, inspectors judge that some of the targets which have been set for high ability pupils in some subjects, for example in mathematics, were not challenging enough. Levels of challenge offered to high ability pupils, including high ability disadvantaged pupils, varied across the curriculum. They were particularly strong in English and modern languages.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities generally make the progress that is expected of them and receive good support from staff. Funding is used effectively to support these pupils. In Year 11, pupils are currently making significantly better progress in English than in mathematics. Staff say that these pupils are not yet coping with the enhanced demands of the new mathematics examinations.
- Catch-up funding is generally well used to improve the standards of literacy and numeracy of those pupils who arrive from primary school with low scores in their basic skills. Most are now making better progress.
- Data for 2016 shows that the proportion of pupils continuing into further education,



employment or training is similar to the national average. Only a very small number of pupils from last year's Year 11 are not in education, apprenticeships or employment. These pupils are receiving ongoing careers support.

### 16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- In 2016, progress in the sixth form was average overall, from an average-ability cohort. Overall value-added for A level examinations was close to national averages, but value-added for both AS level and Applied General subjects was significantly below average overall in 2016.
- Recent changes to leadership of the sixth form have made a significant difference to the quality of teaching and the progress that students make. Students feel listened to and their suggestions are taken seriously by school leaders. Leaders know the students well individually and are therefore able to create bespoke support packages for them. Leaders have taken effective action to improve outcomes in subjects which underperformed in 2016.
- Most sixth-formers are now making good progress from their starting points. Subject outcomes for 2017 are predicted to be in line with or above national averages, including in vocational subjects. Inspectors found plenty of evidence in lessons and in students' work over time that progress will improve this year. Students are making strong progress over time.
- Pass rates for resits in English and mathematics GCSE were above national averages in 2016. Predicted outcomes in mathematics for 2017, however, are not as strong as in English.
- Teaching in the sixth form is effective. Teachers have in-depth knowledge of their syllabus and assessment criteria and they are developing students' practical, learning and examination skills effectively. Teachers are generally good at planning lessons which meet the differing needs of their students. Students told inspectors that work is usually challenging for them. Occasionally, however, there is too much emphasis on note-taking and not enough on learning.
- The sixth form curriculum offers students a broad range of academic and applied vocational choices. Students speak warmly of the wide range of opportunities open to them. Retention from Year 12 into Year 13 is very good.
- There is a good personal development programme which prepares sixth-formers well for life in modern Britain. Students have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe on social media and the internet. The school develops their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding effectively, for example, via the programme which introduces them to people of different faiths. Students told inspectors how impressed they were with the support that the school has given them on mental health issues.
- Students receive excellent careers education, advice and guidance, which supports them in making choices about universities or apprenticeships. A high proportion of students move on to higher education.



### **School details**

Unique reference number 104962

Local authority Sefton

Inspection number 10024253

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.

Mixed

Type of school Secondary Comprehensive

School category Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils 11 to 18

Gender of pupils Mixed

Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study

programmes

Number of pupils on the school roll 807

Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 154

study programmes

Appropriate authority The governing body

Chair Gus Van Cauwalaert

Headteacher Matthew Symes

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Date of previous inspection 31 October to 1 November 2012

#### Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. There are significantly more boys than girls in current Years 8, 10 and 11, but the opposite is true in Year 9 and in the sixth form.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is low compared to national figures.



- The proportion of pupils known to be disadvantaged is close to the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' progress across a number of subjects including English and mathematics.
- A tiny number of pupils access alternative education provision. These are Basetech (Motor Mechanics) and the Pinefield Centre, which is local authority provision for medically unwell children.
- In the last two years, the school has taken significant numbers of pupils into Years 10 and 11 from a local Catholic school which closed.
- The school is a partner in several local networks, where its staff can access support and share good practice. These are: The Archdiocesan Partnership of 37 secondary schools; LINCS (Leadership in North & Central Sefton), which involves 13 secondary and special schools; CAPITAL (Crosby Area Partnership in Teaching & Learning), which supports transition between primary and secondary sectors; and the North Sefton Coastal Teaching School Alliance, which offers subject leader and mathematics support.



# Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a range of lessons. They visited form time and an assembly and observed pupils' conduct at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors evaluated pupils' work in lessons and scrutinised a sample of work provided by senior leaders.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, subject leaders, class teachers and governors.
- Inspectors met with three groups of pupils and sixth-formers formally and spoke with many more pupils informally. There were no responses to the online pupil survey.
- The inspection team looked at a wide range of documents. These included: the school's internal data which tracks pupils' achievement; development plans and evaluations of the school's progress; minutes of governing body meetings; school policies; safeguarding procedures and records showing how the school supports vulnerable pupils. Inspectors also scrutinised the school's website to ensure it met requirements.
- The team took account of the 40 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and of the 26 free-text responses received from parents. There were no responses to the staff online questionnaire.

### **Inspection team**

Clive Hurren, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Elizabeth Haddock	Ofsted Inspector
Alyson Middlemass	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Veitch	Ofsted Inspector
Tim Long	Ofsted Inspector
David Roberts	Ofsted Inspector



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