

Our Lady's RC High School

Alworth Road, Higher Blackley, Manchester M9 0RP

Inspection dates

31 January–1 February 2017

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

- School leaders, including governors, have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are determined to continue improving opportunities for pupils.
- School leaders have taken effective action to improve outcomes since the last inspection. More pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, now make progress similar to or better than others nationally.
- School leaders do not always monitor closely the impact of their actions to support disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a consequence, leaders are not always able to recognise the differences the support makes precisely enough.
- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Teaching is good overall, including in mathematics, where it was previously less strong. However, teaching in science is not consistently good.
- School leaders ensure that arrangements to keep pupils safe are thorough and effective. Most pupils attend school regularly. Attendance for those who have special educational needs has improved significantly but remains low.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning and work is carefully presented. Pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar in writing, and their use of standard English when speaking, have improved significantly since the last inspection.
- School leaders are determined pupils will continue to succeed after Year 11. The high standard of careers advice and broad range of subjects offered means large numbers of pupils move on to appropriate education or training.
- Pupils form positive relationships with their peers and staff. The school is a diverse, happy and outward-looking community.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the progress already made to improve outcomes further for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders should closely monitor the impact of actions taken to support pupils in these groups.
- Ensure all pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities attend school regularly.
- Ensure the teaching science is consistently strong, to enable all pupils to make the best possible progress in this subject.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leadership and management of the school are good and have strengthened since the current headteacher's appointment in September 2015.
- School leaders have promoted a culture of self-improvement and high standards for all. Staff have confidence in school leaders and the morale of teachers is high because of this. The previous inspection identified staff absence as a reason for pupils' low achievement. Staff are now very rarely absent and the retention, recruitment and development of strong teachers and leaders have supported the good progress pupils make.
- The headteacher and senior leaders recognise and act on the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have high expectations for pupils' achievement, attitudes to learning and aspirations.
- Leadership and management of staff performance are strong. Teachers and school leaders are set challenging targets closely linked to pupils' progress. Staff receive the training and support they need to meet their targets and are eligible for any pay progression due if they do.
- Pupils' achievement across a broad range of subjects, including English and mathematics, is rising in line with challenging targets for pupils. Assessment information provided by school leaders indicates that pupils are making good progress, attainment gaps are closing and outcomes are likely to improve further in 2017. School leaders have made sound arrangements for school assessment to be moderated.
- Pupils' achievement in science is not yet consistently good. Progress and attitudes to learning for some pupils in science falls behind that of other subjects they study. Teaching in science is not always strong enough.
- School leaders have a specific focus on raising the aspirations and achievement of disadvantaged boys from a White British background, including those who are most able. Leaders have identified this group as making slower progress than others in the school. The achievement of these pupils is now improving through the targeted development of speaking skills, the use of standard English and regular assessment of spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- School leaders use pupil premium funding effectively. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is quickly moving towards that of other pupils nationally. However, not all leaders are able readily to distinguish and describe the impact of specific actions they have taken or identify which pupils benefited most.
- The funding the school receives to support pupils who join the school with low levels of literacy or numeracy is used effectively. Small class sizes in English and mathematics and carefully targeted intervention and support ensure that almost all pupils make good progress and catch up with their peers. Additional funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used effectively and this helps them to make good progress.
- School leaders have recruited strong teachers, including in areas where teaching was

not previously good enough. Leaders provide detailed feedback on strengths and areas for improvement when observing lessons and looking at pupils' work. Staff are encouraged to improve their teaching based on these recommendations. Consequently, the quality of teaching has improved across a broad range of subjects since the last inspection, including in mathematics, where teaching was not previously strong enough. The school's self-evaluation of teaching as good was confirmed by the strengths seen in teaching and pupils' books during the inspection.

- Pupils study a broad range of subjects. The range of qualifications at key stage 4 has been revised and improved. For example, pupils are now able to study biology, chemistry and physics as separate GCSE qualifications. Leaders work with pupils and parents to ensure that key stage 4 options support pupils' next steps in education, employment or training when they leave the school.
- School leaders are effective in improving the opportunities for pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, to succeed in a range of academic subjects. In 2016 the numbers of pupils who were successful in the English Baccalaureate were far lower than the national average. Because of revision to the subjects offered, appropriate careers guidance, and stronger teaching in mathematics and modern foreign languages that figure is on track to increase rapidly.
- There is strong provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils develop a good understanding of British values. They learn about different religions and cultures and about diversity in Britain. Their respect for peers and others with different sexualities is a consistently strong feature. Pupils enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular and after-school activities which include sporting, cultural, academic and social events.
- Parents say that they receive regular, useful information about the progress their children are making in the school. The views of parents who replied to Ofsted's online Parent View survey are overwhelmingly positive about the way the school is led. They would recommend the school to other parents.

Governance of the school

- Governance is a strength of the school. Governors are ambitious and effective.
- The governing body challenges school leaders to improve opportunities and outcomes for pupils continually.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the school.
- Governors identify and take advantage of appropriate opportunities to keep their knowledge and practice up to date, enabling them to set and insist on appropriate, high standards.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils feel safe and are safe.
- There is a public bridleway that runs through the school grounds. School leaders have taken the necessary steps to manage this effectively to ensure the safety of pupils at the school.

- Governors and school leaders recognise and describe the safety of pupils as their key responsibility.
- All staff have received appropriate training to ensure they keep pupils safe, including 'Keeping children safe in education, 2016'. School leaders ensure that staff are clear about their responsibilities and can identify pupils who might be at risk.
- School leaders work closely and effectively with other agencies and parents to keep children safe. All parents who responded to Parent View said their children were safe and well looked after by the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection. School leaders now judge it to be predominantly good and sometimes better across most subjects and lessons. They base this on their planned evaluation of lesson observations, work scrutiny and assessment records of pupils' progress. Teaching and pupils' work seen in the inspection confirm this judgement.
- School leaders have created a culture of reflection and high expectations among staff and, because of this, teachers take responsibility for their own improvement. As well as the training events planned by school leaders, teachers plan elements of their own programme which are specific to them. In addition, a teaching development group is led and managed by staff and a newsletter, 'All Things Teaching', has been introduced. Consequently, teachers, including those who are newly or recently qualified, can improve their teaching more quickly than would otherwise be the case.
- Teaching in mathematics has improved since the last inspection, where it was identified as an area requiring improvement. School leaders have invested resources in recruiting and training teachers. Consequently, teaching in mathematics is now consistently good and sometimes better. Pupils of all abilities, including the most able, are challenged appropriately.
- Relationships between pupils, teachers and other adults are nearly always strong. Teachers have high expectations which support pupils' good attitudes to learning. Pupils almost always work conscientiously and take pride in what they do.
- Teaching in science is less effective than elsewhere in the school. Pupils are neither sufficiently challenged nor motivated. This results in some low-level disruption and pupils making less progress than seen elsewhere in the school.
- Senior leaders have taken effective measures to improve levels of literacy. Teachers provide pupils with opportunities to develop their speaking skills and practise their use of standard English. These skills enable pupils to write with more confidence and with greater accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Effective examples of this were seen across a range of subjects, including in English and physical education.
- Teachers set regular and appropriate homework across a broad range of subjects and this contributes well to pupils' learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- Pupils' personal development and welfare are good.
- Pupils have a strong sense of how to keep themselves safe across a range of different situations.
- The school environment is inspiring and reflects the high standards school leaders promote. Displays share strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural themes. All displays are thoughtfully presented and carefully maintained.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. British values are appropriately planned as part of the curriculum pupils study. Sessions focus on democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and tolerance of other faiths and cultures. Pupils demonstrate these values. The school is an inclusive and outward-looking community.
- Pupils are very clear that conduct which is discriminatory or prejudice-based, including racist and homophobic bullying, is not acceptable. They describe such attitudes and behaviour as very rare in the school. Pupils say that on the very rare occasions bullying takes place or comments are made, they are dealt with quickly and effectively by adults.
- School leaders effectively support pupils' health and well-being, including sex and relationships education. The curriculum covers issues appropriately and additional support is provided by the school nurse.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of clubs and activities outside lessons and many participate in them. These include sport, academic study and cultural activities. For example, the school production of the musical 'Les Misérables' was running at the time of the inspection. By becoming involved, pupils enrich their personal development and further strengthen the positive relationships they have with each other and with staff.
- School leaders are firmly committed to helping pupils to move on to appropriate courses in further education, employment or training when they leave the school. Pupils are provided with high-quality information, advice and guidance about their future careers and opportunities from key stage 3. At key stage 4 they follow a course in preparing them for working life. Consequently, many more pupils than previously, including disadvantaged pupils, move on to challenging courses after they leave, including A-level study.
- In recent years, the proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, who did not move on to any further education, employment or training has been too high. There has been a sharp reduction in this number and it is now broadly in line with the national average.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils recognise and value the respect and care shown

to them by staff and this is effective in developing and maintaining their own positive relationships.

- Pupils are courteous and confident. They wear their uniforms smartly, are polite and behave well around school.
- Attitudes to learning are good. Pupils are usually punctual. They take pride in the quality and presentation of their work. Low-level disruption and poorer standards seen in a minority of lessons are linked to lower expectations and weaker teaching.
- School leaders place a strong emphasis on encouraging, supporting and recognising good behaviour. Pupils, parents and staff all agree that good behaviour is the norm at the school.
- Leaders carefully monitor information about behaviour at the school and because of this they identify pupils needing support at an early stage. Support includes that from trained staff in school as well as some external agencies. Consequently, records show that instances of serious disruption in lessons are much reduced; there have been none this school year so far. Exclusions have reduced significantly for groups where they had been too high in the past, including for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Attendance is good for most pupils. Pupil absence has fallen and it is below the national average. Absences are closely monitored and any pupils who fall below the attendance thresholds set by school leaders are quickly, and usually effectively, supported to improve their attendance. Disadvantaged pupils have good attendance and this continues to improve. It compares favourably with that of other pupils nationally. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent has also fallen. However, for pupils who have special education needs and/or disabilities, absence rates remain too high.
- School leaders effectively monitor and ensure the good behaviour, attendance and safety of the small number of pupils who are educated off-site.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Outcomes are good. Progress for the Year 11 pupils who left the school in summer 2016 was in line with the national average. Progress and attainment for current pupils and almost all groups, including disadvantaged pupils, are in line with or above national expectations across a broad range of subjects. This is because of high standards and expectations, strong attitudes to learning and good or better teaching in most lessons.
- At the time of the last inspection, the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, who comprise a significant proportion of pupils at the school, were too low. There has been much improvement in progress for disadvantaged pupils across a broad range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are moving quickly towards those achieved by other pupils nationally.
- The progress of pupils in subjects where it had not previously been good enough has improved and is now good or better. In mathematics, school leaders report that current Year 11 pupils, including the most able, attained good scores in a recent mock GCSE examination which was marked externally. The proportion attaining good grades compared favourably with national outcomes. In modern foreign languages inspectors

saw pupils making very strong progress, because of high-quality teaching.

- Pupils' achievement in science is inconsistent and is not always strong enough.
- Outcomes for the most able pupils are improving. In their most recent school improvement plan, leaders identified these pupils as a group who need to make even better progress. Teachers have responded to this by planning more challenging activities for the most able pupils, and this was seen in subjects including English and mathematics. Consequently, the progress of the most able pupils seen in lessons, books and other information provided by the school indicates that they are on track to attain outcomes in line with others nationally.
- The progress of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is very strong across a broad range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well overall. However, the attendance of some pupils is not good enough and this slows their progress. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities study a broad and balanced range of subjects. They receive additional support, such as one-to-one sessions and in-lesson support where necessary. Teachers have been trained by specialists from within and outside the school to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make strong progress.
- School leaders and teachers regularly analyse assessment information, and this helps to support more rapid progress for pupils who need it.
- The progress of disadvantaged most-able pupils is improving. School leaders have identified White British disadvantaged boys, including those who are most able, as a group of pupils who are at risk of slow progress in the school. They receive specific support and attention. Consequently, their progress is starting to improve in specific areas such as speaking skills and writing.

School details

Unique reference number	105576
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10024116

This inspection of the school 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 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	735
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Campbell
Headteacher	Lee Ormsby
Telephone number	0161 795 9004
Website	http://www.olsc.manchester.sch.uk/
Email address	admin@olsc.manchester.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 February 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is slightly smaller than the average secondary school, and shares its site with another secondary school, North Ridge High School. A public bridleway runs through the school site.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and those supported by the pupil premium is much higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities supported by the school is well below average.

- A very small number of pupils attend alternative provision.
- The school met the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress by the end of Year 11 in 2016.
- The school's most recent Section 48 inspection of religious education took place in June 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 29 lessons across a broad range of subjects. Six lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with four groups of pupils. They also spoke with pupils in lessons and at break and lunchtimes. Inspectors considered 51 responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff, including senior and middle leaders, teachers and newly qualified teachers. A meeting was held with four members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chairs.
- Inspectors took account of the 16 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 56 questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documentation provided by the school when considering the judgements. This included information on pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour, records of governing body minutes, school policies, the school's self-evaluation of its work and plans for improvement, and information about safeguarding.

Inspection team

Stephen Ruddy, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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John Leigh	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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