

St Edmund Arrowsmith Catholic Centre for Learning (VA)

Cumber Lane, Whiston, Liverpool, Merseyside L35 2XG

Inspection dates

3–4 May 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders, including governors, were too slow to act on the findings of the previous inspection report.
- Crucial leadership and management systems failed during the critical illness of the previous principal. This had a severe and adverse effect on teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- The progress of pupils in 2015 and 2016 was inadequate across a broad range of subjects. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, boys and the most able pupils were particularly low.
- Although the progress of current pupils is improving, it is not rapid enough to make up for weaknesses in the past.
- Governors have not challenged leaders sufficiently to secure good outcomes for all groups of pupils.
- The teaching of numeracy skills is not consistently effective across different subjects.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent across the school. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils. The work set by some teachers lacks sufficient challenge.
- Teachers do not use information on pupils' previous attainment to build on prior learning in a consistent way.
- Pupils' attendance is improving. However, it is below average for all pupils, including pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils.
- The quality of subject leadership is too variable. In some departments such as mathematics, outcomes are not improving rapidly enough.
- The teaching of numeracy skills is not consistently effective across different subjects.
- Some pupils lack the self-confidence to participate fully in lessons and the resilience to rise to a challenge.

The school has the following strengths

- The interim principal has acted quickly to identify aspects of the school that need improvement.
- The capacity to improve the school is exemplified by strong leadership, which, together with support from the executive monitoring board, has improved the quality of teaching and behaviour.
- Leaders provide effectively for pupils' well-being. Pupils feel safe and well looked after in school.
- Support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment information about pupils' progress to plan learning that challenges pupils
 - making sure that all staff have high expectations of all groups of pupils
 - raising standards of numeracy across the curriculum.
- Improve outcomes for all pupils by:
 - accelerating the progress made by the most able, disadvantaged pupils, and boys
 - continuing to improve the provision in all subjects, especially in mathematics.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - continuing to take rapid steps to improve attendance rates for all pupils, and particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - developing pupils' self-confidence and resilience to sustain their efforts in lessons so that they are able to complete more-challenging work.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the achievement gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally are diminished
 - subject leaders continue to develop the necessary skills to contribute to rapid school improvement
 - governors rigorously hold leaders to account for the progress of all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils

An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how the school may improve this aspect of its work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and governors were reluctant to accept the findings of the previous inspection. The extent of the school's decline was not realised until 2015, when the GCSE results were extremely low. Unsettled leadership slowed the pace of improvement further and pupils underachieved markedly in 2016.
- The local authority and archdiocese have brought stability to the leadership of the school by securing the services of the interim principal. She has led the school effectively since June 2016. Her work during this time has led to rapid and effective change. This is halting the decline in pupils' achievement. However, there is a considerable amount of ground to cover to ensure that pupils are well equipped for their next stage of their education, training or employment.
- The interim principal has raised expectations and improved staff morale. The majority of staff who responded to the online survey said that they were proud to work in the school. They think that the school has improved under her leadership.
- The senior leadership team has been strengthened; for example, the new leadership for developing teaching and learning and for promoting pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare is strong. Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. There is now greater accountability for pupils' outcomes at all levels.
- Middle leaders are increasingly being held to account for the success of their subjects and the difference this makes to pupils' outcomes. They have benefited from recent training from leaders at a local outstanding school. However, some middle leaders lack the necessary skills to support and challenge their colleagues when teaching is not effective. Teaching in some subjects is not as strong as it should be and there is wide variation in the performance of different subjects.
- Subject leaders in English and religious studies are making a positive difference to teaching. In English, for example, the leader is setting high expectations and has demanded higher levels of challenge in lessons from her colleagues.
- Leaders have upgraded the systems to manage teachers' performance. Weak teaching in most subjects is now being tackled appropriately. Teachers' specific needs are identified and this has resulted in improved teaching. Newly qualified teachers value the wide range of professional training and support that they receive.
- Leaders have not used pupil premium funding well over time. It is not resulting in equality of opportunity for these pupils, as their progress has been slower than that of others nationally. Leaders recently commissioned an external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding from a local outstanding school. The recommendations of this review have begun to influence the school's actions positively. Disadvantaged pupils now receive more-targeted additional support. However, the impact of this funding is still too variable.
- Leaders use the Year 7 catch-up funding effectively to improve the literacy skills of pupils in Year 7. However, the school has not done enough to develop pupils' numeracy skills.

- The curriculum has recently been reviewed because leaders recognised that it did not enable all pupils to be successful. It is now broad and balanced. Leaders are planning to introduce a range of vocational subjects at key stage 4 to meet the needs and interests of pupils.
- The school's Catholic values are at the heart of school life. Each morning, pupils and staff have the opportunity to pray, reflect and commit to doing their best.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is strong. There is a well-coordinated programme of assemblies and tutorials designed to promote understanding of diversity and celebrate different faiths. An effective citizenship programme places an emphasis on teaching pupils about British values such as democracy and respect.
- Pupils benefit from a varied range of extra-curricular activities such as dance and drama. Sporting activities such as football are especially popular and contribute well to promoting healthy lifestyles. Pupils are also involved in charity work. Other opportunities include the gardening club and a bird-watching club.
- The leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving. Pupils' needs are accurately identified and parents are fully involved. Additional funding has been used effectively to provide more tailored provision for this group of pupils, such as specialist support for pupils with visual impairment and autism.
- The local authority has provided effective support for leaders, such as reviews of attendance, behaviour and teaching and learning. This has allowed leaders to evaluate successes accurately and plan for the future.
- The recent improvements in key stage 3 indicate that there is capacity to improve. The improvements in teaching, attendance and behaviour all point to the ability of leaders and governors to improve the school.
- The majority of parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire and free-text responses would recommend the school.

Governance of the school

- A new executive monitoring board to strengthen governance was put in place by the archdiocese and local authority in September 2015. The members of the executive monitoring board have supported the interim principal in her efforts to improve the quality of education in the school and secure the school's finances.
- Over time, governors have not checked carefully enough how the pupil premium funding is being used to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils. They have not challenged leaders sufficiently about the underachievement of this group of pupils.
- Governors are committed to improving outcomes for pupils in their school. They are now developing a greater understanding of the strengths and priorities for improvement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- A culture of vigilance prevails in the school. Records of checks on the suitability of staff are thorough and up to date. Governors regularly check safeguarding information. All staff have completed training in safeguarding, including training to protect pupils from the risks of extremism and radicalisation. Staff know what to do if they have any concern about a pupil's welfare or safety. Leaders work effectively with families and a range of external agencies to ensure the well-being of pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Until recently, teaching has not helped a significant number of pupils to make the progress that they should for their ages and abilities. Low expectations have resulted in inadequate outcomes for pupils, across a range of subjects, for a number of years.
- There are clear signs that teaching, learning and assessment are getting better. This is due to leaders regularly observing the quality of teaching in lessons and providing staff with training adapted to their needs. However, the quality of teaching is inconsistent within subjects and between year groups.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of the pupils they teach. In some lessons, teaching lacks challenge. This limits pupils, especially the most able, from making the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to explain ideas and concepts to pupils clearly. Pupils have positive relationships with each other and their teachers. Pupils typically commented: 'The best part of being here is the learning.'
- Some teachers use their good knowledge of individual pupils to set work which moves their learning forward. This does not happen well enough in all classes, meaning that pupils find their work too easy or too difficult.
- In most lessons, teachers use questioning effectively to deepen and extend pupils' understanding.
- Leaders have made every attempt to ensure the accuracy of assessments for new courses, by internal moderation and consultation with a local teaching alliance.
- Pupils are encouraged to read widely and often. There is a developing culture of reading in the school. Teachers provide pupils with many opportunities to become familiar with different types of texts.
- Teaching assistants help pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to understand their work through small-group work and individual support. As a result, the progress of this group of pupils is improving.
- Homework is not being set consistently. This is a concern to a significant number of parents.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils are compliant but not confident learners. Some pupils give up when they find work is too hard. As a result, they fail to make the progress of which they are capable.

- Pupils have an awareness of the different types of bullying and say that there is very little bullying in school. Pupils say that when bullying occurs it is dealt with promptly. School records indicate bullying is rare.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and value the support given to them by staff. A typical comment from pupils is: 'I wouldn't change anything about my time here.'
- Leaders have ensured that a comprehensive programme of personal, social, health and economic education is in place. Pupils learn about railway safety awareness, cyber bullying and personal finance and a range of other factors important to their well-being. There are good links with the local community police officer, who helps pupils to understand important aspects of personal safety.
- Pupils' leadership skills are developed well through the student council and opportunities to work with younger pupils. This helps them to develop personal skills which will serve them well in the future.
- Teachers make visits to pupils' primary schools prior to them joining in Year 7 in order to make the move to secondary school as smooth as possible.
- Leaders carefully check that pupils at alternative provision attend regularly and are well supported.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Attendance is below the national average, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. However, it is improving rapidly as a result of the robust actions of leaders. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is above the national average. Leaders use all available sanctions, including fines and formal warnings, to challenge unauthorised absence. There is evidence of recent improvement but leaders are aware that there is more to do as poor attendance is still having an impact on the progress some pupils make.
- Leaders have reinforced the behaviour policy. Clear expectations of behaviour are applied consistently by staff. Consequently, pupils know what is expected of them and behaviour has improved considerably. Pupils told inspectors that behaviour is much better this year than it was previously in school.
- Fixed-term exclusions were high last year. As a consequence of leaders robustly enforcing the behaviour policy, the number of internal and external exclusions has fallen considerably because there are now far fewer incidents of misbehaviour.
- Pupils are polite and friendly. They wear their uniform well, showing pride in their school. Pupils move around the building in an orderly manner. Staff deal swiftly and appropriately with any issues that may arise. Pupils socialise well at break and lunchtimes.
- Pupils' punctuality to school and lessons has improved. Most pupils arrive to lessons with the equipment that they need.
- Pupils respect their school environment. There is no evidence of litter or graffiti.
- The vast majority of staff are positive about the behaviour of pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Over time, pupils have not achieved well academically at this school. The GCSE results across a broad range of subjects, including English and mathematics, have been significantly below average for all pupils since the previous inspection. This is because pupils make weak progress from their starting points. Consequently, the school failed to meet the government's floor standards in 2016. Progress in mathematics is particularly slow over time.
- Leaders' own information shows that progress for current Years 10 and 11 is improving. However, due to the legacy of underachievement, many pupils are still working well below where they should be for their age.
- In 2015 and 2016, disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, made inadequate progress across a range of subjects. They performed considerably less well than other pupils nationally with similar starting points. Disadvantaged pupils in the current Year 11 continue to underachieve.
- In 2016, the progress of the most able pupils including the most able disadvantaged pupils was well below the average compared to other pupils nationally in English, mathematics, science and languages. Inspection evidence shows that the progress of these pupils continues to be weak.
- Over time, boys have achieved more slowly than girls across a range of subjects including English and mathematics. Current assessment information shows that boys are still making less progress than girls in Year 10 and Year 11.
- School data, observation in lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work show that pupils in key stage 3 are making faster progress than pupils in key stage 4. This is because of better teaching and improved accountability. The work in books shows that the progress of current disadvantaged pupils in Year 7 and 8 is improving because the additional support that they receive is being targeted more effectively.
- Boys are also making better progress in key stage 3.
- Progress for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was below the national average in 2016 across a range of subjects. However, the progress of this group is improving because of well-planned, individualised support from teachers and other adults.
- Pupils who enter the school with below-expected reading skills are catching up due to well-targeted spending of the funds available to support these pupils. Leaders' actions are having less of an impact in improving pupils' numeracy skills.
- Outcomes for pupils attending alternative provision are positive because they have individualised programmes and receive high-quality support. Leaders ensure close liaison between school staff and providers.
- Although outcomes were low for pupils who left Year 11 in 2016, most progressed into further education, employment or training as a result of good careers guidance. Pupils have access to a coherent programme to build their knowledge, skills and competencies, including visits to local colleges, employers and universities.

School details

Unique reference number	135481
Local authority	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	10032198

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	1001
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	John Robson
Interim Principal	Heather Scott
Telephone number	0151 477 8770
Website	www.seaonline.org.uk
Email address	admin@seaonline.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	13–14 January 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- St Edmund Arrowsmith Catholic Centre for Learning (VA) is a larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have support for special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is broadly in line with national average.
- At the time of the inspection, 36 pupils attend alternative education provision off the

school site at the following providers: Everton Free School, Evolve, Knowsley Community College, Harmonize, Meadow Park, Motive 8 Sports and Skillsbase.

- The school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in 2016.
- The archdiocese, local authority and governing body have secured the services of an executive principal from June 2017 until a new substantive principal is appointed in 2018.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning across all year groups and a wide range of subjects. Some of these observations were made with school leaders. Inspectors visited form time and an assembly and observed pupils' conduct at break and lunchtime.
- Pupils' work in lessons was scrutinised by inspectors. They also looked at a sample of pupils' books to evaluate their learning over time in different subjects. Inspectors listened to a group of Year 7 pupils read.
- Inspectors met with three groups of pupils formally and spoke with many more pupils informally. They took account of the 91 responses to the pupil online questionnaire.
- Discussions were held with staff, including the interim principal, senior and middle leaders, classroom teachers and newly qualified teachers. Meetings were held with the chair of the interim executive board and two other governors, two representatives of the local authority and a representative from the archdiocese. Inspectors also held telephone conversations with representatives of alternative providers.
- The inspection team scrutinised a wide range of documentation including: records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance, safeguarding information, minutes of governing body meetings, information on the progress made by pupils, training arrangements for teachers and other staff, the school's checks on the quality of teaching, external reviews by consultants, the school's self-evaluation and the school improvement plan.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, taking into account 28 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 21 free-text responses received from parents. They also considered the 48 responses to the staff online questionnaire.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Dawn Farrent	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Lomas	Ofsted Inspector
Annette Patterson	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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