

St Augustine of Canterbury Catholic High School

Boardmans Lane, Blackbrook, St Helens, Merseyside WA11 9BB

Inspection dates

7–8 February 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders and governors have overseen a significant decline in the quality of education that the school provides. Pupils are being let down. Standards are far too low.
- Pupils across the school make inadequate progress from their starting points. With the exception of history, art and food technology, pupils' progress is exceedingly poor.
- The leadership of the school at all levels is fragile. Some senior leaders do not have the knowledge, skills and understanding to improve the school at the pace required.
- Governors are not effective in holding leaders to account. They have not built the necessary capacity in leadership to improve the school.
- Middle leaders do not have the role models or the skills that they need to improve standards.
- Leaders do not evaluate the impact of the curriculum on pupils' outcomes. A poorly planned curriculum is responsible for significant underachievement.
- Leaders' use of additional funding, including the pupil premium funding, has been ineffective. Disadvantaged pupils do not attend school regularly and their progress is among the lowest in the country.
- Senior leaders do not have an understanding of how pupils are progressing at key stage 3. Consequently, pupils do not have secure foundations to succeed at key stage 4.
- Leaders' systems to check on teaching are ineffective. Leaders have been unable to secure the necessary improvements to teaching so that pupils make at least good progress.
- Teachers do not plan learning that meets the needs of pupils. In too many lessons, learning is characterised by extremely low expectations.
- Too often, teachers do not use accurate assessment information in their planning. Consequently, they do not challenge pupils to achieve their potential.
- Pupils' attendance is very low. Too many pupils are late to school or do not attend regularly.
- Too many pupils are disrespectful and confrontational and prevent others from learning.
- Some pupils are unable to regulate their own behaviour. They do not have sufficient self-confidence or resilience to achieve well.
- Leaders temporarily exclude too many pupils, particularly boys and disadvantaged pupils, from school and from lessons.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has an accurate view of what needs to be done to improve the school.
- Leaders provide strong pastoral support for pupils. Pupils feel safe in school.
- Staff and pupils do not tolerate bullying. Incidents of bullying are rare.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve the quality of leadership and management across the school, by ensuring that:
 - the governing body provides strong and effective challenge for leaders
 - senior leaders fulfil their roles effectively
 - middle leaders have the role models and the skills that they need to improve the quality of teaching in their respective areas
 - expectations of what all pupils can and should achieve are raised
 - the curriculum is well planned and meets pupils' needs
 - the pupil premium funding is used effectively to stem the decline in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils
 - the systems for tracking pupils' progress, particularly at key stage 3, are effective.
- Significantly improve outcomes for pupils across the school.
- Urgently improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by ensuring that:
 - teachers' assessments accurately reflect where pupils are in their learning
 - teachers plan learning that meets the needs of pupils and challenges them to achieve at high levels.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, by:
 - rapidly improving attendance and punctuality to school, especially for disadvantaged pupils
 - eradicating disrespectful and confrontational behaviour that stops other pupils from learning
 - helping pupils to regulate their own behaviour and develop resilience in learning.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to see how this aspect of leadership and management can be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders, including governors, have overseen a significant deterioration in the quality of education that the school provides. Consequently, the overall effectiveness of the school has declined considerably. Pupils' achievement and standards of behaviour across the school are unacceptably low.
- The headteacher, who has been in post for two years, knows the areas that need to be improved in the school. However, he has not been able to address them as quickly as he might because of weaknesses in senior and middle leadership, as well as in governance.
- Senior leaders and governors have unwittingly created a climate of low aspirations and expectations. They do not encourage staff to be ambitious for pupils, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have an inaccurate view of pupils' ability when they join the school in Year 7; this is particularly the case for pupils with high starting points. As a result, staff underestimate pupils' capabilities and teachers do not plan learning that challenges pupils to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Senior leaders have lower aspirations for the attendance of disadvantaged pupils than they have for other pupils. This further hinders the high proportion of disadvantaged pupils at the school from achieving well. It does not promote equality of opportunity.
- Leaders do not base their evaluations of the school on robust evidence. For example, the systems to identify underperformance in teaching lack rigour. This means that leaders are slow to identify and address weaknesses in teaching. Weak teaching is continuing to hamper pupils' progress.
- The lack of urgency of some senior leaders in addressing deficiencies in the quality of education is preventing the school from improving quickly enough. Concerns that inspectors identified at the last inspection still remain, particularly in science, alongside worrying longer term trends of underachievement in too many other subjects.
- Senior leaders have been very slow in their approach to improving attendance. Pupils' absence has been significantly above the national average for three years. However, it is only in the last 12 months that leaders have begun to take action to address pupils' low attendance. A lack of strategy in this area has meant that improvements to date have been tentative. Poor attendance is having an extremely detrimental effect on the progress that pupils are making.
- Leaders do not take a strategic approach to improving the school. For example, they have only just undertaken a review of the curriculum, despite pupils' poor outcomes over a sustained period of time. Some leaders are unable to articulate the rationale for the curriculum. They do not have a clear view of how effectively it supports pupils' learning and progress. Consequently, leaders' planning of the curriculum is poor and the curriculum is not well taught.
- The current curriculum allows some of the most able pupils to attain a high number of qualifications at GCSE. However, leaders have only recently acknowledged that the curriculum model prevents some pupils from doing well. Although leaders understand that the curriculum does not fully meet the needs of pupils, many pupils at key stage 4

continue to study a curriculum that is not fit for purpose. This prevents pupils from reaching the standards of which they are capable.

- Leaders lack the capacity to improve the school. Some senior leaders do not have the skills or the knowledge that they need to improve the school at the pace required. For example, leaders do not have an understanding of how particular groups of pupils are progressing. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils. The systems to check that middle leaders are accurately tracking pupils' progress at key stage 3 are ineffective. Disparities in assessment information across subjects mean that teachers are unclear about pupils' starting points. As a result, learning at key stage 3 is poorly planned and pupils do not have the firm foundations that they need for key stage 4.
- Leaders do not measure and evaluate the effectiveness of their actions. Consequently, they do not understand whether their actions are making a difference. This has particularly been the case with how they have spent the pupil premium funding in recent years. Disadvantaged pupils in this school have low attendance, they are excluded too often and they make considerably less progress than other pupils at the school and other pupils nationally. A pupil premium review was undertaken in January, but leaders' improvement plan for this aspect of the school is still a 'work in progress'.
- Leaders have appropriate systems in place to monitor the progress of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. There are a number of strategies in place to help and support these pupils. However, the support is not having a big enough impact on the progress that they make. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities continue to underachieve across the curriculum. In particular, those disadvantaged pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make considerably slower progress than other pupils at the school who have similar needs.
- Leaders provide opportunities to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. For example, the student council helps to educate pupils on the values of democracy. Pupils develop their understanding of different faiths and cultures through the religious education curriculum. There is an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities which the pupils value. The strong Christian ethos of the school allows pupils to develop spiritually and the solid leadership of both art and history ensures that pupils develop culturally. Pupils' artwork, which is on display around the school, is simply stunning.
- There have been a number of new appointments at middle leadership level. Middle leaders are keen and enthusiastic and they are committed to improving teaching. For example, the leader of mathematics is beginning to take steps to increase opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning skills, particularly at key stage 3. Nonetheless, middle leaders are inexperienced. They do not have the leadership role models or the necessary skills that they need to improve teaching in their own subjects at the pace required.
- The local authority's appointment of a school improvement partner is beginning to improve some aspects of leadership, particularly the skills of middle leaders. In more recent months, the local authority and archdiocese have intensified the support package for the school. However, a number of entrenched issues at the school have been apparent for some time. The representatives from the local authority and the archdiocese underestimate the endemic weaknesses in leadership at all levels.
- Leaders may not appoint newly qualified teachers to the school.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has overseen a significant decline in the quality of education that the school provides. Although governors now have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, the level of challenge that they provide is insufficient. They have not taken the necessary action to remedy weaknesses.
- Governors lack the skills, knowledge and expertise to hold leaders rigorously to account. This has slowed the rate of school improvement significantly. Consequently, the rate of progress that pupils make is unacceptable and pupils' attendance and behaviour are poor. Pupils are underachieving considerably in most areas of the curriculum.
- The governors have failed in their duty to support disadvantaged pupils. They have not ensured that leaders' spending of additional funding, including pupil premium funding, has been effective. Disadvantaged pupils have not received their entitlement. Consequently, the levels of progress made by disadvantaged pupils are among the lowest in the country.
- Governors know that they have not asked the right questions of leaders in the past. They have recently increased the level of challenge that they provide. Nonetheless, governors have not yet built the necessary leadership capacity to support improvements which are so urgently needed.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have taken the necessary steps to ensure that all adults at the school are suitable to work with pupils. Staff have undertaken training to ensure that they can recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse. Staff follow the correct safeguarding procedures.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school because the staff support them. Pupils with whom inspectors spoke explained that teachers deal effectively with incidents of bullying. As a result, incidents of bullying are rare. Staff provide pupils with strong support to keep themselves safe, including online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching has declined significantly. With the exception of history, art and food technology, teaching is not allowing pupils to make progress across the school.
- Lack of challenge is a particular concern. Teachers do not have an accurate understanding of pupils' starting points. Teachers do not use accurate assessment information to plan learning, particularly at key stage 3. As a result, teaching is characterised by low expectations. Many pupils have disengaged from their learning.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, are not high enough. Work is often too easy. Teachers are not planning lessons that meet pupils' needs.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is strong, but they are not using this knowledge to

challenge pupils or to capture pupils' interest. Consequently, pupils are not doing as well as they could.

- Many pupils have their learning disrupted because teachers do not use the school's behaviour policy well. A significant minority of pupils deliberately disrupt the learning of others. Over time, teachers' lack of challenge means that pupils rarely receive rewards for their efforts.
- Poor attendance means that a high proportion of pupils have large gaps in their knowledge. Teachers identify those pupils who are falling behind. However, their strategies to support these pupils are not always effective. This, combined with extremely low pupil attendance, means that gaps in pupils' knowledge are widening.
- Pupils with whom inspectors spoke explained how they have limited opportunity to benefit from high-quality teaching because they have had a number of different teachers. There is a lack of continuity in their learning and some pupils have repeated work that they have done before. This is particularly the case in science.
- In the strongest subjects, namely history, art and food technology, teachers' clear explanations, high expectations and strong positive relationships support learning. As a result, pupils make excellent progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- A climate of low expectations and a lack of challenge for pupils over a period of time mean that many pupils demonstrate little, if any, resilience. Many pupils do not understand how to be successful learners.
- A significant minority of pupils show a complete disregard for their own learning and the learning of their peers.
- Staff know the pupils well. Pupils find staff approachable. Pupils value the support that they receive from staff with their physical and emotional well-being.
- The support that pupils receive to help them with their post-16 choices is well developed. The 'Shaping Futures' scheme has had a particularly positive effect. However, in many cases, pupils are unable to progress to the most appropriate courses because of poor performance at key stage 4.
- Incidents of bullying are rare. Pupils report that the school is a safe place, including for those pupils who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.
- There is effective communication with alternative providers. Leaders regularly check on the personal development, behaviour, welfare and attendance of those pupils attending alternative provision.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Pupils, parents and carers, and staff share concerns about behaviour. The behaviour of

many pupils is poor. School records show that, in a considerable proportion of lessons, pupils' behaviour affects the learning of others. A significant minority of disrespectful pupils wilfully disrupt learning. They display behaviour that is discourteous, rude and confrontational.

- The majority of pupils move around school in a calm and mature manner. However, there is a proportion of pupils who cannot regulate their own behaviour in between lessons and at social times.
- A scrutiny of pupils' work shows that too many pupils produce poorly presented and unfinished work. In some cases, work that is of a shoddy standard goes unchallenged by teachers. Pupils' poor attendance also means that there are a significant number of gaps in pupils' work.
- Too many pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, are late to school and late to lessons.
- Poor attendance is a significant barrier to pupils' learning and progress. Around one fifth of pupils are regularly absent. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are regularly absent is even higher and it is increasing.
- Leaders are working to address the poor attendance of some pupils and an attendance officer has been appointed. However, the improvements to date have been tentative.
- Disadvantaged pupils, particularly boys, are far more likely than their peers to be excluded. Leaders are addressing this worrying situation but rates of improvement are slow. The behaviour of a minority of Year 8 boys is deteriorating.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Provisional GCSE results for 2017 show that the progress made by pupils in key stage 4 was inadequate across the curriculum. In English, mathematics and science, pupils' progress was among the worst seen across the whole country.
- In 2017, provisional progress information shows that disadvantaged pupils underachieved across the curriculum. Disadvantaged pupils made exceptionally poor progress in English, mathematics, science and languages. Insufficient challenge from governors and weak leadership of this area have meant that leaders have not targeted funding effectively. As a result, pupils have not been able to benefit from their entitlement.
- Over time, the progress made by pupils in science has been unacceptably poor. For the last three years, the progress made by pupils from their starting points in science has been in the bottom 10% of schools in the country. Current pupils are beginning to make slightly better progress. This is because of recent staffing appointments and improvements in the leadership of science. Nonetheless, poor-quality teaching and disruptive behaviour mean that pupils are still not making the progress of which they are capable. They continue to underachieve considerably.
- Following new appointments in middle leadership and some improvements in teaching, there are signs that pupils' progress is improving, particularly in English and mathematics. However, it is not improving rapidly enough. Leaders' assessment information indicates that pupils in both Years 10 and 11 will go on to underachieve considerably. The progress that disadvantaged pupils are making in mathematics,

particularly in Year 10, remains worryingly slow.

- Leaders were unable to provide a convincing account of how current pupils at key stage 3 are progressing. Inspectors found that pupils' progress at key stage 3 is too slow because teachers are not using assessment information effectively. As a result, teachers have low expectations and do not routinely challenge pupils.
- In 2017, provisional information shows that pupils made strong progress in history. Current pupils continue to make excellent progress in history, art and food technology. This is because teachers of these subjects have high expectations of pupils. Teachers plan lessons that meet pupils' needs.
- Improvements in the provision for careers education mean that the overwhelming majority of pupils go on to employment, education or training. However, pupils are not always able to access the most appropriate courses because they have underachieved at key stage 4.

School details

Unique reference number	104833
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	10045117

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	614
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eugene Moran
Headteacher	Mark Hagan
Telephone number	01744 678112
Website	www.staugus.org.uk
Email address	staugustine@sthelens.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	21–22 January 2015

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about pupil premium funding on its website.
- This school is smaller than the average-sized school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- A very small number of pupils attend alternative provision at Aspire or PACE at Derbyshire Hill (a pupil referral unit).
- Since the previous inspection, the school has received some support from the local authority.
- The school does not meet the government's floor standards. The floor standards set the minimum expectations for progress and attainment at key stage 4.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a wide range of evidence throughout this inspection. This included a number of lesson observations, some of which were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work during lessons and sampled pupils' written work in English, mathematics and science.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and a group of recently qualified teachers. Inspectors also met with some members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors held telephone conversations with a representative from the archdiocese and a school improvement partner working on behalf of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils both formally and informally, during lessons and at social times. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour before school, after school and at social times.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plan. Inspectors also considered external reviews undertaken by the local authority and documents relating to safeguarding, the quality of teaching, and pupils' attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors took into account 50 staff survey responses, 16 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and 16 written responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text facility.

Inspection team

Emma Gregory, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Hampson	Ofsted Inspector
Jonathan Smart	Her Majesty's 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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