

St Francis Xavier's College

High Lee, Woolton Hill Road, Liverpool, Merseyside L25 6EG

Inspection dates

22–23 May 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The pace of improvement since the last inspection has been too slow. Senior leaders and governors have not acted with the required sense of urgency to improve the quality of the curriculum, teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Procedures for checking the quality of what happens across the school are not thorough enough. Consequently, assessment information, particularly for key stage 3 pupils, is not reliable.
- The quality of middle leadership is variable. Not all heads of departments have the skills to improve standards in their subjects.
- Pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable, particularly in science, mathematics and religious education (RE).
- In recent years, disadvantaged pupils have made particularly poor progress. Leaders have not ensured that the pupil premium funding has been used effectively to help these pupils to get the most out of their education.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies across the school. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve. They do not provide them with the right level of challenge.
- Leaders have taken action to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. However, too many of these pupils still do not attend school regularly.

The school has the following strengths

- The sixth form is well led. Students benefit from high-quality provision and achieve well.
- This is a very caring school where staff at all levels demonstrate genuine concern for the welfare of their pupils.
- Pupils receive effective careers education, advice, information and guidance (CEAIG) that supports their progression into further education, training or employment.
- The inclusive ethos in the school means that pupils' differences are valued.
- Pupils are polite and friendly. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive and based on mutual respect.
- Recent changes in senior leadership mean that the school is in a strong position to make rapid improvements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and governance by ensuring that:
 - senior leaders and governors continue to work with a sense of urgency to bring about improvements across the school
 - senior leaders and governors use thorough quality assurance procedures to monitor and evaluate all aspects of the school's work
 - the assessment system provides accurate and reliable information about pupils' progress, particularly in key stage 3
 - all middle leaders have the skills to improve standards in their respective areas
 - pupil premium funding is used effectively to enable all disadvantaged pupils to achieve their potential.
- Improve outcomes for pupils by ensuring that:
 - all pupils make at least good progress in all subjects, particularly in science, mathematics and religious education (RE)
 - the progress of disadvantaged pupils matches or exceeds that of other pupils nationally.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that all teachers:
 - have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve
 - provide their pupils with the right level of challenge
 - use questioning effectively to develop pupils' understanding
 - develop pupils' deep knowledge and skills of reasoning and problem-solving
 - accurately assess their pupils' progress, particularly in key stage 3.
- Build on the improvements already made to further reduce the number of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities who do not attend school regularly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The actions that senior leaders and governors have taken since the last inspection have not been effective enough to raise standards across the school. Following the outcomes in 2017, senior leaders have worked in a more focused way and with a greater sense of urgency. This means that many pupils are now making better progress. However, leaders are accurate in their assessment that many areas of the school still require further improvement.
- At the time of this inspection, the leadership of the school is very much in a transition phase. The executive headteacher and head of school are retiring at the end of this term. Governors have appointed a new interim headteacher who has a proven track record of school improvement. He takes up his post officially in September but has already been working in the school in an improvement role.
- Since his appointment, the new interim headteacher has used his time well, working collaboratively with staff and pupils, and communicating his vision and plans for the coming year. Staff and pupils who spoke with inspectors feel that their views are valued and are very positive about the future direction of travel.
- Quality assurance systems are not sufficiently rigorous. This means that senior leaders and governors are not able to monitor what happens across the school in a systematic and effective way. Consequently, the evaluations that they make about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress are not always reliable. This is particularly evident in the key stage 3 assessment information. Inspection evidence shows that the school's most recent data on key stage 3 pupils' progress does not always match what is seen in the quality of work in their books.
- While there are some examples of strong subject leadership in the school, this is not the case in all departments. Some middle leaders do not have the skills to monitor and evaluate effectively what is happening in their departments. Consequently, they are not able to take appropriate action to improve the quality of teaching and raise standards in their subjects.
- In recent years, senior leaders have not used the pupil premium funding effectively enough to help disadvantaged pupils to make better progress. The poor outcomes in 2017 acted as a catalyst for change in the way that leaders work with these pupils. Leadership of this area is now much more focused. Ensuring that disadvantaged pupils achieve well is a high priority across the school. A comprehensive programme of mentoring exists and leaders monitor very closely the impact of their actions. The most significant impact can be seen in the improved attendance rate of this group of pupils. The difference that this is making to pupils' progress can be seen more in key stage 3 than key stage 4.
- Leaders have a clearer rationale this year for how they are spending the pupil premium funding. Nevertheless, it is still not clear how some of the decisions that they have made ensure that the funding is being targeted in the most beneficial way, to have the greatest impact for disadvantaged pupils.
- Over recent years, the curriculum has not enabled all pupils to achieve well. The

curriculum has been redesigned for next year with the underpinning rationale of enabling pupils of all abilities to make good progress across a range of subjects.

- Leaders understand how extra-curricular activities can enrich pupils' education. To this end, they ensure that pupils have opportunities to be involved in activities ranging from debating to sport. The school's sports teams often enjoy success. For example, in the week of the inspection, the Year 10 football team won the national schools' FA cup final.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a high priority for leaders and is at the heart of the school's ethos. This an inclusive school that values diversity. In this environment, pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain. Pupils are encouraged to become active citizens, for example by volunteering or taking part in the Liverpool Schools' Parliament.
- Leaders track how many disadvantaged pupils are involved in extra-curricular activities. However, they acknowledge that they do not do enough to ensure that this group of pupils are making the most of the school's enrichment opportunities.

Governance of the school

- The quality of governance has improved since the last inspection. Governors have honed their analytical skills and changed the way that they work. Consequently, they are more effective at holding senior and middle leaders to account. That said, they acknowledge that they must continue to develop their skills and expertise in order to provide the necessary challenge as well as support to the new interim headteacher.
- Governors value the support that they have received from the local authority over the last two years. Working together with representatives from the local authority on the monitoring group, which was formed after the last inspection, has helped to develop governors' skills.
- Governors understand the importance of stability and continuity as the school moves to the next stage on its journey of improvement. Consequently, it is their intention to make an early decision in the new academic year about the long-term leadership of the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All safeguarding protocols and practices are fit for purpose. Systems to ensure that only suitable people are recruited to work with pupils are secure. Staff keep detailed records of safeguarding concerns. Frequent pastoral meetings ensure that relevant information is shared and pupils are carefully monitored.
- Leaders ensure that all staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding. Concerns are dealt with promptly and appropriately, including through referrals to outside agencies.
- Leaders have created a strong culture of safeguarding in which pupils feel safe, valued and happy. Pupils know who to speak to if they have any concerns or worries. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel well supported.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Strong teaching does exist but this is not consistent across the school. This variability means that not all pupils benefit from the high-quality teaching that they need to make the best possible progress.
- Not all teachers have high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve. This lack of challenge is preventing some pupils from making good progress. For example, some teachers use questioning effectively to probe and extend pupils' understanding. However, too many teachers question their pupils in a limiting and superficial way. This does little to deepen pupils' thinking.
- Some teachers are not developing pupils' knowledge and understanding to a deep enough level. Added to this, not enough time is devoted to developing pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills, particularly in mathematics and science. This means that some pupils are not skilled in applying any knowledge that they have to unfamiliar contexts.
- The variation in teachers' expectations is evident in the quality of pupils' work. Some teachers do not challenge incomplete or poor-quality work, nor do they encourage pupils to take pride in their presentation. Pupils' work also shows that, in key stage 3 particularly, teachers' assessment of their pupils' progress and attainment sometimes lacks rigour and accuracy.
- Pupils value the positive relationships that they have with their teachers. When these are coupled with high expectations, these strong relationships contribute significantly to the quality of learning and pupils' progress. An example of this was seen in a Year 9 English lesson where pupils were clearly used to being given time to reflect and think deeply in a supportive environment. On this occasion, it meant that they were able to make thoughtful and perceptive comments about war poetry.
- Pupils routinely benefit from high-quality teaching in modern foreign languages, design technology and art. Consequently, pupils' outcomes in these subjects are typically strong.
- Improving pupils' literacy skills has been a strong focus in professional development sessions. Pupils' books indicate that most teachers are adhering to the marking for literacy policy. It is also clear from books that many departments are providing opportunities for pupils to hone their extended writing skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. This is a very caring school where staff at all levels demonstrate a genuine concern for the welfare of their pupils. As a result, pupils feel very well supported.
- St Francis Xavier's is a school that values individuals, recognising that everyone is different but equal. This creates an environment in which pupils feel safe and comfortable. This gives pupils confidence, for example, to be open about their sexual

orientation or gender identity.

- Bullying is rare but when it does happen the pastoral staff deal with it promptly and effectively.
- Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is currently delivered in 'drop-down' days. Leaders have identified the flaws in this arrangement, including concerns about pupils missing out on important areas if they are absent on these days. As part of the new curriculum model for next year, pupils will be taught PSHE education in a weekly lesson.
- Leaders are proactive in checking on the personal development, behaviour and welfare of the small number of pupils that attend alternative provision. A rigorous protocol exists for checking their attendance.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils generally conduct themselves well around the school. They are polite, friendly and welcoming to visitors. During breaks and lunchtimes they socialise well and show respect to each other and to staff.
- In most lessons, pupils' behaviour is good and they demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. There are some occasions where this is not the case. However, this is usually where pupils have become disengaged as a result of poor-quality teaching. A number of staffing issues this year mean that some classes have been taught by supply staff, which has had a negative impact on some pupils' behaviour.
- The school's inclusion centre provides a safe environment in which staff can work with the small number of pupils who exhibit poor behaviour. There is a high success rate of pupils successfully reintegrating into the main school having spent some time in the inclusion centre. Consequently, permanent exclusions are very rare and the fixed-term exclusion rate is below the national average. Leaders have had success in reducing the number of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities who are excluded. This will remain a focus for leaders until there is no difference between the rates for these groups and their peers in school.
- As a result of concerted action across the whole school, the overall absence and persistent absence figures have decreased and are now below the national averages. Leaders' actions have also improved the attendance rates of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. However, leaders recognise that too many of these pupils are still not attending school regularly. Reducing the persistent absence rates of these groups further is a high priority for leaders.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- There were some valid contextual reasons why the school did not meet the government's floor standards in 2017. Notwithstanding this, leaders acknowledge that the Progress 8 score was very disappointing and have taken action in response to this. For example, too many pupils spent time in alternative provision in previous years and this is now no longer the case.
- In 2017, pupils made particularly poor progress in mathematics, science and religious

education. Some of the reasons for this relate to staffing issues. In science and religious education, these issues remain and continue to have a negative impact on pupils' progress.

- The school's current assessment information indicates that pupils in all year groups are generally making better progress than in the last two years. However, leaders are aware that underneath the headline figures, inconsistencies remain. Pupils' progress in science remains a particular area of concern.
- In 2017, the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils were particularly concerning. In response to this, leaders have changed their approach to how they help these pupils overcome their barriers to learning and achieve well. This is having an impact across the school but particularly in key stage 3, where disadvantaged pupils are making good progress. The one caveat to this is the uncertainty relating to the reliability of some of teachers' assessments in this key stage.
- Staff effectively identify pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities through transition arrangements with primary schools, discussions with parents and carers, appropriate screening tests and staff referrals. Staff ensure that provision for these pupils is tailored to their individual needs. This means that most pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress during their time at the school.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have had significant success in raising the profile across the school of reading for pleasure. The school benefits from having a well-stocked library that pupils will have increased access to from next year.
- The quality of the CEAG that pupils receive continues to be a strength of the school. The leadership of this area is strong and pupils in all year groups benefit from an effective CEAG programme. Leaders use the Gatsby benchmarks for good careers provision to evaluate the quality of their own programme. Providing pupils with high-quality CEAG is a priority for leaders. This has contributed significantly to the impressive statistic, in the last three years, of 100% of pupils progressing to further education, training or employment at the end of Year 11.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Effective leadership in the sixth form means that students benefit from a high-quality post-16 experience. The head of sixth form and his team have high expectations of their students. This can be seen in the way that they follow up any issues that are highlighted through the half-termly monitoring system. One impact of this is the high retention rate.
- The head of sixth form has a clear understanding of the many strengths in post-16 provision at the school. He also has an accurate assessment of the small number of areas that still require further improvement. For example, although students generally benefit from high-quality teaching, he knows that in some subjects, there is room for greater challenge in lessons and sharper assessment practice. This is a leadership focus in order to ensure that more students gain the highest grades.
- Leaders also recognise that while the provision meets all the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programme, they have improved the arrangements for work experience from next year. The new arrangements broaden the range of opportunities for work

experience for all students.

- The sixth-form curriculum offers a wide range of subjects that is enhanced by a consortium with a local girls' school. This wide choice of subjects contributes to the popularity of the sixth form, which has grown since the last inspection.
- The majority of students make good progress throughout their time in the sixth form. Overall outcomes for students are strong, particularly in academic A levels. Over recent years, students have made particularly good progress in history, information and communication technology (ICT) and English literature. Outcomes in vocational courses are not as strong as in academic ones. Leaders are giving consideration as to the appropriateness of some of the vocational courses. However, the subject with the largest cohort, BTEC computing, has had consistently positive outcomes over recent years.
- Students who resit English and mathematics GCSEs are provided with high-quality teaching and support. Consequently, the success rates when students retake these examinations are very high.
- PSHE education and enrichment opportunities are currently offered through 'drop-down' days and form periods. Students also have the opportunity to be involved in volunteering, for example in local schools. In the new curriculum model next year, students will have a weekly enrichment session.
- Students who fall behind are very well supported to get back on track. Teachers and pastoral staff know their students extremely well and are able to provide appropriate personalised support. Students value this. There is very strong practice related to supporting students who have mental health issues or who are dealing with challenging family circumstances.
- Students benefit from effective CEAIG throughout their time in the sixth form, particularly in relation to university applications. A high proportion of students go on to higher education, with a significant number taking up places at Russell Group universities. Leaders also ensure that they provide students with appropriate CEAIG related to degree-level apprenticeships and employment.
- Leaders have adopted similar strategies to those seen in Years 7 to 11 to improve students' attendance. This has had a positive impact but leaders acknowledge that further improvement is required in this area.

School details

Unique reference number	138463
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10042449

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,152
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	213
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Andrew Keeley
Executive Headteacher	Les Rippon
Telephone number	0151 288 1000
Website	www.sfx.liverpool.sch.uk
Email address	admin@sfx.liverpool.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 February 2016

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average-sized Catholic school for boys with a mixed sixth form. The school is in a consortium with a local Catholic girls' school for its sixth-form provision.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is slightly below the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is higher than the national average and an average proportion of these pupils have an education, health and care plan.

- The school only uses alternative provision for a very small number of pupils. At the time of the inspection, Alder Hey Hospital School, Assess Education and New Heights were the providers being used.
- In 2017, the school did 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 observed teaching and learning in lessons across a range of subjects, including joint observations with leaders. Inspectors looked at pupils' and students' work during their observations. Two inspectors carried out a work scrutiny with senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with four groups of pupils. They also talked with others informally during breaks and lunchtimes. Discussions were held with staff, including senior and middle leaders, pastoral staff and classroom teachers, including those newly and recently qualified. A meeting was held with seven members of the governing body, including the chair. The lead inspector also met with two representatives of the local authority and a representative from the archdiocese.
- Inspectors took account of the 101 responses to Ofsted's online 'Parent View' survey, and the 67 free-text responses.
- Inspectors took into account the five responses to the online pupil questionnaire and the 60 responses to the online staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included the school's self-evaluation and development plan; information about the school's performance; and a selection of policies, including those relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

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Timothy Gartside	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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