

Sacred Heart Catholic College

Liverpool Road, Crosby, Liverpool, Merseyside L23 5TF

Inspection dates

19–20 September 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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The standard of education provided at the school declined after the last inspection. Too many pupils have not attained the examination grades that they are capable of.
- The quality of leadership and management is variable, especially across middle leadership.
- Pupils' rates of progress are improving overall. However, they remain variable, especially for disadvantaged pupils, pupils with low starting points and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- Leaders have not ensured that teaching is consistently good.
- Leaders do not effectively ensure that teachers consistently provide pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities with the support and challenge that they require.
- Despite improvements in teaching, variability remains, particularly in mathematics and science.
- Teachers do not consistently use assessment information, including from the tests that pupils take at the end of primary school, to plan work that stretches pupils' thinking.
- Teachers do not consistently ensure that pupils with low starting points are supported and challenged effectively.
- Sixth-form students, especially those with high starting points, do not routinely make good progress in A-level courses, because the quality of teaching is variable.
- Too many students in the sixth form do not complete the courses that they start.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, other senior leaders and governors demonstrate the capacity to improve the standard of education provided.
- The quality of teaching is consistently strong in some subjects, including English, Spanish and history.
- Pupils' conduct and attendance is good.
- Leaders provide a curriculum which meets pupils' needs. As a result, where teaching is good, pupils make the progress they should, including those who are most-able.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare is good, including that of students in the sixth form. Pupils are typically confident, courteous and aspirational.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' outcomes, especially for those who are disadvantaged, pupils with low starting points and those who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - reducing variability in the impact of middle leadership
 - ensuring that an effective and coordinated approach is adopted to supporting the learning of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - ensuring that all groups of pupils benefit from teaching that caters well for their needs.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - reducing variation in the quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics and science
 - ensuring that assessment information, including results from the tests that pupils take at the end of primary school, is used effectively by teachers to plan work that stretches and challenges pupils
 - ensuring that pupils with low starting points are consistently supported and challenged to make good progress.
- Improve the quality of the 16 to 19 study programmes by:
 - strengthening leadership so that leaders' plans and actions have a demonstrable impact on improving the quality of education that students receive
 - improving the careers advice and support given to students so that a greater proportion start and complete courses that are well matched to their interests, aptitudes and ambitions
 - ensuring that all students benefit from consistently effective teaching on A-level courses so that all groups of students, especially those with high starting points, consistently attain the grades of which they are capable.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The standard of education provided at the school declined after the previous inspection in 2015. Too many pupils did not make good progress, because of weaknesses in teaching. The headteacher and governors have acted to improve the school and, despite remaining weaknesses in teaching and pupils' progress, the standard of education that the school provides is on an upward trajectory once again.
- The headteacher and other senior leaders accurately understand where and how the school needs to improve. The positive differences that they have already made, such as boosting the progress of the most able pupils and securing pupils' good progress in English, demonstrate their capacity to further improve the standard of education at the school.
- Senior leaders have taken steps to strengthen middle leadership, which was previously an area of weakness. They have recently restructured leadership in key aspects, including the subject leadership of English, mathematics and science, and the leadership of provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. As a result, the overall effectiveness of middle leadership has begun to improve. Subject leadership is strong in English, humanities and modern foreign languages. However, variation remains. Some middle leaders do not effectively monitor, evaluate and refine their plans and actions to improve teaching and outcomes in their areas of responsibility. As a result, the impact of middle leadership on the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes remains too variable. Furthermore, the impact of actions that some recently appointed leaders have introduced is not established or secure.
- Senior leaders' focus on improving the quality of teaching has secured improvement. These improvements have been underpinned by leaders' uncompromising view that all pupils deserve to be taught well and challenged to reach their potential. Previously, there was less emphasis on pupils making strong progress from their academic starting points. This is no longer the case, and this represents an important sea change in the school's ethos. As a result of this shift in emphasis, there has been some turbulence in staffing in recent years as some teachers have left the school due to leaders' increased expectations. Most current teachers, including those who have been recently appointed, have a clear understanding of their responsibility to ensure that pupils make good progress. This has led to better teaching across the curriculum and throughout the school.
- Leaders have ensured that teachers benefit from training opportunities that are supporting the improvements being made to teaching. Most teachers are positive about the training that they receive, and say that they can see the difference it is making to the effectiveness of teaching. Where teaching has improved most securely, such as in English, teachers have recognised and adopted strengths that they have seen in the teaching of others at the school. However, there are other cases where strong teaching, such as that in Spanish and history, has not been shared effectively. As a result, teachers have not had the opportunity to learn from these teachers to further develop their own practice. The sharing of good practice is therefore not systematic across the school. This is contributing to the significant variability that remains in the

quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics and science.

- Senior leaders have a clear rationale for the design of the curriculum. Pupils study a wide range of subjects at key stage 3. This ensures that the curriculum is broad, balanced and meets pupils' needs. The key stage 4 curriculum is designed to prepare pupils for the next stage of their education and careers. This curriculum provides ample scope for the large proportion of pupils who have high starting points to opt for courses that provide challenge and facilitate progression to a range of ambitious opportunities in the future. Senior leaders evaluate the impact that the curriculum has on pupils' outcomes at key stage 4. They have identified that pupils with low starting points do not make good progress consistently. However, this is a consequence of weaknesses in teaching, rather than the curriculum that they follow.
- Senior leaders take positive steps to ensure pupils' participation in the wide range of cultural, creative and sporting activities that take place beyond lessons. This is recognised by pupils as a positive aspect of the school's curriculum.
- Leaders' use of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is not fully effective. Senior leaders are aware of this weakness and have recently reviewed how it is managed. They have assessed, evaluated and refined the actions that they take to improve disadvantaged pupils' education. As a result, disadvantaged pupils' attendance, which was previously stubbornly low, is improving. There are also signs that disadvantaged pupils are starting to make better progress than previously, particularly lower down the school. However, this aspect requires further strengthening to quicken the pace of improvement.
- Leaders have not ensured that their use of the funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is helping these pupils to make progress that is similar to their peers in the school and nationally. The support for these pupils provided by specialist staff is generally effective. However, leaders have not ensured that teachers receive the training and support that they require to ensure that their teaching meets the needs of these pupils. As a result, these pupils, particularly those with low starting points, are not routinely taught well. Some teachers do not use information about the needs and abilities of these pupils to ensure that their teaching meets their needs. As a result, there is too much variability in the quality of teaching of these pupils, and their progress is inconsistent.
- The careers guidance programme is effective. Pupils receive information which meets their requirements. This includes independent advice and guidance, which meets pupils' typically high aspirations. As a result, a large majority of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, move on to next steps in education or training. Despite this, the school has not ensured that all pupils who transfer to the school's sixth form embark on courses that are well matched to their needs and aspirations. As a result, a significant proportion of pupils do not complete the courses that they start in the sixth form. Furthermore, some pupils' weak achievement at the end of Year 11 limits the range of opportunities available to them once they leave the school.
- Leaders' plans to support the pastoral transition of pupils from primary school are effective. Staff with responsibility for transition share and use information that they have been given by primary schools effectively. The Year 7 pupils with whom inspectors spoke were positive about their first weeks at the school. Leaders also share

information about pupils' academic performance at primary school in order to ensure that teachers set work at the correct level. However, this information is used inconsistently. As a result, pupils are not routinely provided with work that matches their needs.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. Governors challenged school leaders and held them to account for the decline in the standard of education provided at the school after the last inspection. Their work has been key to reversing the decline in the school's fortunes. Governors' strengths, alongside those of senior leaders, provide the capacity to secure the improvements that still need to be made.
- Governors have refocused the school's ethos on the importance of ensuring strong progress for all groups of pupils. This shift has underpinned the improvements that have been made to teaching and leadership. Governors have a precise understanding of where weaknesses in teaching and leadership have led to weak outcomes. Governors are determined that all staff, including new appointments, understand and meet the high standards that they expect. They do this effectively.
- Governors have sought the necessary support to secure effective financial management of the school. As a result, it has a secure financial base from which to strengthen the quality of education that it provides.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Checks made by inspectors found that staff, including non-teaching staff, are trained in identifying potential risks to pupils. They know pupils well and are vigilant in supporting pupils' safety, including those pupils whose emotional well-being is at risk.
- Checks were made by inspectors to test the security of the school sites. They found this aspect of safeguarding to be effective.
- School leaders work effectively with external agencies, parents and carers. They act swiftly when required. Referrals are made to external agencies as appropriate.
- Leaders maintain good-quality safeguarding records. They have systematic procedures for checking the backgrounds of staff when they are appointed.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of the risks which might affect them and how to keep safe, including when online. They know to whom they should report concerns and how to do this.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Senior leaders, including governors, are well aware of the emergence of weaknesses in teaching across a range of subjects since the last inspection. Leaders challenge weaker teaching and have high expectations for all staff, including those who are newly appointed. As a result, teaching is improving and is typically effective in English,

Spanish and history.

- However, teaching is not consistently strong enough to ensure that all pupils make good progress. There are pockets of weaker teaching across and within subjects, including in mathematics, science and physical education.
- Teachers do not consistently use the information that they have about pupils to provide work at a level that enables them to make consistent gains in their learning. As a result, the rate of pupils' progress is variable, both within and across subjects. Pupils with high starting points typically make stronger progress than others because they are provided with work that is pitched at an appropriate level more regularly. The learning of these pupils is deepened where teachers use their strong subject knowledge to engage and challenge pupils' thinking. However, teaching is not as effective for other groups of pupils. In particular, teaching for pupils with low starting points is not consistently effective.
- Teachers do not consistently pitch work at a level that enables pupils in Year 7 to make consistent gains in their learning. In some cases, pupils are set tasks that needlessly repeat topics which they have mastered in primary school. When this occurs, this does not represent the best use of time, and opportunities are missed to more quickly extend pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Furthermore, teachers do not consistently use information from pupils' Year 6 test results to set work which provides pupils with opportunities to build effectively on their prior learning.
- Teachers are not routinely taking effective steps to ensure that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities learn as well as others. Some teachers support and challenge these pupils well. When this occurs, pupils make good progress. However, in too many cases, teachers do not cater sufficiently for these pupils' requirements. As a result, the teaching of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is not enabling them to make rates of progress that are similar to their peers in the school and nationally.
- Some teachers ensure that pupils are challenged and interested in their learning over time. This is particularly the case in Spanish and history. In these subjects, teachers capitalise on pupils' positive attitudes to learning, and they inspire them to make strong progress. However, this good practice is not consistent. Where teaching caters less effectively for pupils' needs, such as in mathematics and science, pupils' learning is more superficial, and rates of progress are less strong.
- Senior leaders have introduced assessment systems that strengthen teachers' monitoring and evaluation of pupils' progress. Leaders and teachers use their monitoring to identify pupils who have fallen behind. This is helping the school to provide more effective support to pupils who are not making the progress of which they are capable. As a result, this aspect of the school's work is helping a greater proportion of pupils to make better progress than previously.
- Pupils are set regular homework which is pitched at an appropriate level to consolidate and extend their learning. Leaders' work to ensure that the completion of homework makes an important contribution to the progress of disadvantaged pupils is starting to have a positive impact.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Inspectors were impressed by pupils' typically upbeat manner. Pupils are courteous, articulate and confident. They are keen to engage in learning activities and, when provided with the opportunities to do so, think deeply and explore new ideas with curiosity, precision and creativity.
- Pupils are responsible and conscious of the feelings and well-being of others. As a result, they typically enjoy positive interactions with one another and adults. The pupils with whom inspectors spoke, and most parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, believe that bullying is rare, and that staff deal with it effectively. Checks of bullying records made by inspectors showed that incidents of bullying are followed up and resolved effectively.
- Leaders take their responsibility for pupils' mental and physical health seriously. The pupils with whom inspectors spoke confirmed that staff are approachable and considerate of pupils' well-being. Leaders take necessary steps to ensure that these aspects are promoted effectively through pupils' learning and through the school's support services.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Leaders ensure that pupils learn about fundamental British values and other faiths and cultures effectively. The pupils with whom inspectors spoke recognise and value differences, and they respect views different from their own. Some pupils were preparing for a visit to a local mosque at the time of the inspection. Others were eloquent when describing the value of democracy to their lives. Pupils are adamant that incidents of racism and homophobia are not tolerated.
- School leaders manage effectively the personal development and welfare of the small number of pupils who attend alternative provision.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils typically behave well in lessons. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning impressed inspectors. Pupils are keen to attain high academic standards, and they take pride in their work. Cases of pupils' poor conduct disrupting lessons are few and far between. On the rare occasions where pupils lose concentration or there is low-level disruption, it is generally because teachers have not set work at an appropriate level or are not supporting pupils' needs effectively.
- Pupils' conduct around the school is good. At breaktime, lunchtime and at the change of lessons, pupils move around the school in an orderly manner. They arrive punctually at lessons. Pupils treat the school environment with respect and do not leave litter lying around.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly in line with the national average. Systems recently

introduced to secure the good attendance of pupils who have been persistently absent in the past, such as those who have SEN and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, are showing signs of positive impact.

- School leaders manage effectively the attendance, behaviour and safeguarding of pupils who attend alternative provision.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' performance in external examinations since the previous inspection has indicated significant variation in rates of progress between different groups of pupils and in different subjects. Overall, pupils made significantly less progress than others nationally in 2016 and 2017. Information shared by school leaders regarding provisional results in 2018 indicates some improvement in overall progress. However, provisional information about the progress of Year 11 pupils who sat examinations in 2018 indicates that weaknesses remain in the progress of disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and those with low starting points. Furthermore, pupils continued to make weak progress in mathematics and science. Despite this, the results indicate that pupils had made stronger progress than previously in English, humanities and modern foreign languages. The results also indicate an improvement in the progress of the most able pupils.
- Inspectors' analysis of pupils' current work shows that more pupils are attaining well and making good progress than was the case previously. However, variation remains within and across subjects because teaching and leadership require improvement. For example, some pupils do not make the progress that they are capable of in key stage 3, because tasks needlessly repeat what they have learned in primary school or do not provide them with opportunities to think deeply enough about their learning. Pupils generally make stronger progress in English, history and Spanish than they do in mathematics and science.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils remain weak. Their performance in external examinations in 2016 and 2017 indicated that they had made significantly less progress than others nationally. The provisional examination results shared by school leaders for 2018 indicate early signs of improvement. The work of disadvantaged pupils currently at the school, and in different year groups, shows that the differences in attainment and progress between disadvantaged pupils and others are starting to diminish. However, this improvement is in its early stages and it is too early to judge whether the improvements have become an established upwards trend.
- More pupils make good progress from their starting points than was the case previously. However, significant inconsistencies remain. Most current pupils with high starting points make good progress overall, although this is not always the case in mathematics and science. The progress of pupils with broadly average starting points is improving. More of these pupils are making good progress because of the school's focus on improving teaching for this group. However, too few pupils with low starting points are making the progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities do not make consistently good progress. This is because teachers do not routinely use the information provided by school leaders to set challenging work, and to ensure that the support that they provide is well matched

to these pupils' needs.

- Leaders monitor effectively the quality of education for pupils who attend alternative provision. These pupils benefit from appropriate curriculums that focus on preparing them for the next stage of their education.
- Almost all pupils progress to further education, employment or training. Most pupils enter the school with strong key stage 2 scores. These pupils typically attain grades that provide them with opportunities to follow the courses or next steps that they wish to pursue after Year 11. Other pupils are supported effectively to remain in education or training, although weaknesses in their achievement limit the range of opportunities that are available to them.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- The standard of education that students receive in the sixth form varies. It is not consistently good. Most students follow academic courses. Too many of these pupils have not attained the examination grades of which they are capable over recent years. The smaller proportion of students who follow vocational courses typically attain grades that match or exceed those with similar starting points nationally.
- Sixth-form leadership requires improvement. Leaders do not assess, monitor and evaluate students' learning well. Where students make slower progress than they should, notably on A-level courses, leaders do not act decisively to secure improvements to teaching and the curriculum.
- Students do not consistently make good progress. Most students follow A-level courses. Too many of these, especially those with strong GCSE grades, do not make the progress of which they are capable across a broad range of subjects. This is in contrast to the small number of students who follow vocational subjects and typically achieve well. The small number of disadvantaged pupils generally make similar progress to others with similar starting points.
- School leaders and governors accurately judge students' outcomes as requiring improvement because of weaknesses in the teaching of some A-level courses over time. Inspectors confirmed these weaknesses in teaching, particularly for the most able students. Teachers' expectations of what these students can achieve are not high enough, and they are not routinely set work that challenges them to attain the highest grades. Students with lower starting points make better progress because the work that they are set is generally pitched at a level that supports their progress. Conversely, the teaching of vocational courses is consistently strong. As a result, students learn well and make good progress.
- Students who resit GCSE English and/or mathematics make better progress than others nationally in improving their grades.
- Leaders ensure that opportunities for students' personal development and work-related learning form an integral part of their curriculum experience. As a result, these aspects meet the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programmes and make a strong contribution to students' wider development. For example, students enjoy leading and participating in charity events that support schools overseas that are linked to the diocese. Students also value their opportunity to help pupils in key stage 3 to develop

their reading skills.

- Sixth-form leaders do not consistently ensure that students benefit from good information and guidance on entry to the sixth form. Too many students have embarked on courses that are poorly matched to their abilities, aptitudes and aspirations. As a result, too many students do not complete the courses that they start. On the other hand, students who join courses that are well matched to their needs are well supported to access an appropriate destination when they leave the sixth form. For example, they benefit from effective help with the process of applying to higher education.
- Safeguarding is effective in the sixth form. Students are well prepared for adulthood. Students' behaviour and attendance are good. Students are supported well to manage risk and look after their own welfare.

School details

Unique reference number	104961
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	10046375

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 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1300
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	267
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Louise Fraser
Headteacher	Ian Walker
Telephone number	0151 931 2971
Website	www.sacredheart.sefton.sch.uk
Email address	head.sacredhearthish@schools.sefton.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	21–22 April 2015

Information about this school

- This is a Roman Catholic, voluntary-aided school.
- The school was inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in February 2018.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is well below the national average.
- The school uses alternative provision for a small number of pupils at New Horizons.

Information about this inspection

- Meetings took place with school leaders, teachers and members of the governing body. Inspectors also spoke with a representative of the Archdiocese of Liverpool.
- Discussions were held with pupils to gather their views on a variety of issues, including safeguarding, bullying, behaviour, teaching, careers guidance and the curriculum.
- Inspectors examined a range of the school’s documentation, such as the self-evaluation and improvement plan, assessment information, the pupil premium plan, attendance and behaviour records and safeguarding information.
- Inspectors took account of 41 staff survey responses, 112 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and 80 written responses from parents to Ofsted’s free-text facility. Inspectors also considered seven pupil survey responses.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across a range of subjects and year groups. They were accompanied by school leaders on some of these observations.
- Inspectors scrutinised the work in pupils’ books by undertaking a work analysis with school leaders.

Inspection team

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Sue Lomas	Ofsted Inspector
Nell Banfield	Ofsted Inspector
Osama Abdul Rahim	Ofsted Inspector

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