

Maricourt Catholic High School

Hall Lane, Maghull, Liverpool, Merseyside L31 3DZ

Inspection dates

16–17 October 2018

| Overall effectiveness | Requires improvement |
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| 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

- Pupils' performance in GCSE examinations in 2016 and 2017 indicated that they had made weak progress during their time at the school.
- Although provisional information indicates that outcomes improved in 2018, pupils' progress is still not good in a number of subjects, including science.
- The effectiveness of middle leadership is too variable. Subject leaders do not routinely monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning in their areas well.
- Pupils benefit from a curriculum that is broad and balanced and has an academic core. However, leaders have not ensured that the curriculum provides sufficient challenge in key stage 3.
- Leaders and governors have an overgenerous view of how the school is performing. Consequently, plans for improvement are not based on an accurate understanding of the school's current effectiveness.
- Teachers do not make good use of assessment information, including that relating to pupils' starting points when they join Year 7. Consequently, teachers do not consistently ensure that the work they set meets pupils' needs.
- Teachers' expectations of what boys, especially the most able, are capable of achieving are not high enough.
- Students' outcomes on academic courses in the sixth form do not match the good outcomes in vocational subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders, including governors, have created a cohesive community where pupils are valued as individuals and cared for extremely well.
- Leaders and governors have acted to stem the decline in pupils' outcomes in mathematics and English.
- Safeguarding is effective. Leaders have established a positive safeguarding culture.
- There is a wide range of extra-curricular experiences that develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.
- Pupils' personal development and behaviour are good.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to develop the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils' outcomes improve further across the full curriculum, particularly in science, by ensuring that:
 - teachers use assessment information to plan learning that is pitched at the right level to meet pupils' needs
 - teachers have high expectations of what boys, particularly the most able, can achieve.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders' and governors' plans to improve the school are ambitious and rooted in an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness
 - leaders at all levels develop a clearer and more accurate awareness of the strengths and weaknesses that relate to their areas of responsibility
 - subject leaders have a more consistent impact on improving teaching in their areas
 - the key stage 3 curriculum provides pupils of all abilities with sufficient challenge.
- Improve the quality of the 16 to 19 study programmes by ensuring that students' outcomes on academic courses consistently match their good outcomes on vocational courses.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The overall effectiveness of the school declined in the period following the previous inspection. This decline was caused by weaknesses in leadership and management and in the quality of teaching. The performance of Year 11 pupils in external examinations in 2016 and 2017 indicated that they had made weak progress during their time at the school compared to all pupils nationally.
- Provisional information about the progress made by Year 11 pupils who left in 2018 indicates that they had made significantly better progress across the curriculum than their predecessors. Furthermore, this information indicates that these improvements were most impressive in mathematics and English. Indeed, inspectors were able to gather evidence to confirm the positive impact that leaders have had on improving teaching and pupils' outcomes in these subjects.
- Despite these improvements, leaders' actions have not ensured that the school offers current pupils a good standard of education. In particular, too much variability remains in the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of leadership. As a result, there are still weaknesses in pupils' outcomes, particularly in science.
- Leaders and governors have an overly optimistic view of the standard of education offered by the school. Consequently, leaders' plans to improve the school are not based upon an accurate and thorough understanding of the school's effectiveness.
- Leaders are under no illusions about the challenges that they continue to face in addressing pupils' underachievement in science. Leaders have taken a number of actions to address this issue. For example, they have developed links with other schools and worked closely with specialists in an attempt to improve teaching. Despite this, leaders have been unable to make significant and sustained improvements to the teaching of science and pupils continue to make weak progress in this subject.
- The impact of leaders' work to improve the effectiveness of subject leadership has been variable. In some cases, leaders have demonstrated their capacity to bring about clear improvements in their areas. For example, the new subject leader of mathematics has made a highly positive contribution to improving the quality of teaching in a short space of time. Consequently, pupils who sat their examinations last year made progress that was in line with other pupils nationally. Current pupils in key stage 4 are secure in their mathematical learning because it is well planned to meet their needs.
- Subject leaders do not evaluate the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of pupils' learning over time well. Consequently, they often lack a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their areas. This, in turn, is preventing them from taking decisive action to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. As a result of this, pupils' progress remains inconsistent across year groups and between groups of pupils. In particular, subject leaders have had limited impact on raising teachers' expectations of what boys, particularly the most able, are capable of.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils study a broad and balanced curriculum which has a strong academic core. They are committed to providing a high-quality curriculum that is reviewed regularly to respond to pupils' needs. For example, more pupils are

choosing to study a modern foreign language because they have been given greater choice over what they study in key stage 4.

- In contrast, leaders are not setting the bar high enough at key stage 3. Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum at key stage 3 provides sufficient challenge for all groups of pupils. The key stage 3 curriculum, particularly in mathematics, does not build seamlessly on pupils' learning from their primary school education. Furthermore, leaders' expectations of pupils' progress in key stage 3 are too low. Consequently, too many pupils, especially the most able boys, do not make the progress of which they are capable before embarking on their key stage 4 learning.
- Staff morale is high. Adults who work in the school are valued by senior leaders and feel part of a cohesive team. Staff value the professional training that they are given and the opportunities to share their expertise. This is having an increasingly positive impact on helping teachers to refine their practice. Newly qualified teachers are appreciative of the support that they have been given by their subject mentors and middle and senior leaders.
- Leaders pay close attention to the needs of vulnerable pupils, those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have a sound rationale for their use of the available funding to promote pupils' learning and to remove any barriers to their progress.
- The support offered to Year 7 pupils who join the school with low literacy and/or numeracy levels is successful. Leaders ensure that the Year 7 catch-up premium is spent effectively so that pupils catch up with their peers and access the curriculum.
- Pupils told inspectors that they appreciate and enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer at the school. These include sports, clubs, trips and overseas visits. Leaders ensure that participation in these activities is monitored closely so that all pupils can benefit from enriching experiences.
- Almost all parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that they would recommend the school to another parent. Leaders benefit from high levels of parental support.

Governance of the school

- Governors have been unable to prevent the decline in the school's overall effectiveness since the previous inspection. Furthermore, governors' view of the school's effectiveness is overgenerous.
- Governors have worked with leaders to improve teaching and pupils' outcomes, most notably in mathematics and English. Despite this, they have not supported and challenged leaders effectively to bring about consistent improvement across the curriculum.
- Governors have a broad base of relevant skills and experience. They have a clear understanding of how the school spends additional funding intended for disadvantaged pupils. Governors have held the leadership of the school sufficiently to account to ensure the effectiveness of this spending.

- Governors are assiduous in their determination that pupils are cared for and safe and that they develop into well-rounded individuals.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- This aspect of the school's work is highly effective. For example, the process of checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with pupils is well thought through. There is a thorough and effective training programme, including an overview given to new staff as part of their induction.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe at the school. They could also explain how they are taught to keep safe by learning about topics which include road safety, keeping mentally and physically fit and keeping safe online. Leaders' work to ensure that the curriculum supports pupils' safety is highly effective.
- The school welcomes pupils who have been less successful at other schools and ensures that they have the opportunities to lead safe and fulfilling lives.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent across the school. Some teachers do not take pupils' abilities into account when planning learning. Some pupils complete activities that lack sufficient challenge. Others are unable to access activities and time is lost while they wait for help from their teacher. This hinders the progress of pupils in different classes and subjects.
- Some teachers provide pupils with superficial opportunities to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. Pupils complete tasks but the opportunities to explore their learning in depth are limited. Consequently, pupils are sometimes not challenged sufficiently, and their learning is not as deep or secure as it could be.
- Books looked at by inspectors confirmed leaders' views that pupils' progress and attainment in English and mathematics are rising. In English, teaching is consistently good across the department. Current pupils across key stages 3 and 4 are producing the extended writing that leaders expect to see. In mathematics, subject content is being introduced progressively so that pupils' knowledge is secure before new concepts are introduced.
- Some pupils are able to make consistent gains in their learning because they benefit from teachers' strong subject knowledge and high expectations of what they can achieve. For example, in key stage 4 geography, pupils were confidently applying their prior learning on flood plains to an examination question. They rose to the teacher's challenge of 'thinking like a geographer'. Where teachers have high expectations, pupils respond positively. However, in some subjects and year groups, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. In particular, there is not enough insistence that boys complete work, focus on the accuracy of their literacy and take pride in the quality of work that they produce. This impedes their progress. These weaknesses are most pronounced in the teaching of science.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of are lower during key stage 3. As a

result, pupils spend too much time completing work that they can already do, and too little attention is paid to the progression of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills within and across subjects. Consequently, pupils' progress across this key stage is not good.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders ensure that pupils feel valued. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe and they appreciate the extensive support that is provided for them. The needs of vulnerable pupils are exceptionally well met. Parents agree that their children are cared for well. One parent said, 'The support that my child has received at Maricourt is allowing him to lead a safe and fulfilling life.'
- During the inspection, pupils confirmed that bullying of any kind is rare, including racist, homophobic and transphobic bullying. Pupils have confidence that, should it take place, it would be dealt with swiftly.
- The personal, social, health and economic education programme is effective. Topics include the impact of bullying, positive body images and managing personal finances. The programme helps pupils to understand themselves and to respect others.
- Pupils value the effective careers information and guidance that they receive. Pupils in all year groups are well informed about the choices that are available to them for the next stage of their education, training or employment. Pupils take part in events in school to promote learning in this area. During the inspection, Year 11 pupils' employability skills were being supported well through individual career interviews.
- The pastoral support for pupils is highly effective. For example, leaders successfully ensure that pupils experience a positive transition from primary school in terms of their pastoral care. The Year 7 pupils who shared their views with inspectors said that they were happy, felt safe and enjoyed school.
- Pupils told inspectors that the school makes it a priority to keep them safe online and teaches them to recognise other potential dangers. Pupils said that their teachers encourage them to be physically fit. Teachers also offer opportunities for pupils to discuss any emotional and mental health concerns that they may have.
- Some pupils' attitudes to their learning are not consistently positive and they rely too much on staff encouragement to start their learning tasks. Some of the boys' expectations of themselves are low, which has a negative impact on their progress.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Strong and supportive relationships between staff and pupils underpin the calm and orderly atmosphere in the school.
- Pupils' attendance is good. Regular monitoring, alongside effective rewards and

sanctions, means that attendance figures compare well with all other schools.

- Staff and pupils who spoke to inspectors agree that behaviour is good in the school.
- Leaders deal swiftly with any behaviour that is unacceptable. This acts as an effective deterrent to poor behaviour. As a result, the rate of fixed-term exclusion is below the national average.
- The rate of absenteeism for disadvantaged pupils has remained stubbornly high for a number of years. Leaders have strengthened the school's systems for supporting and challenging the families of pupils who are regularly absent from school. Consequently, their attendance, particularly in key stage 3, is improving towards historic national averages.
- Incidents of poor behaviour in lessons are rare. Pupils said that they are clear about the school's expectations and that teachers apply the school's behaviour policy consistently. However, when learning activities are not sufficiently challenging, pupils often do not try their best.
- The small number of pupils who attend alternative provision are supported effectively. This is because staff liaise well with alternative providers. Staff closely monitor the progress, attendance, behaviour and well-being of these pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Year 11 pupils who left the school in 2016 and 2017 made significantly less progress than other pupils nationally. Pupils' progress has been weak in science and mathematics for several years. In 2017, pupils' progress also declined sharply in English.
- Provisional information indicates that Year 11 pupils who left the school in 2018 had made significantly more progress than their predecessors during their time at the school. In particular, they had made much better progress in English and mathematics. Despite this, pupils' achievement continued to vary considerably between different subjects. For example, progress in science remained weak, as did progress in religious education, computing, music and food technology.
- Pupils make stronger progress when leaders and teachers have higher expectations. For example, pupils make less progress during key stage 3 because teachers expect pupils to make less progress than during key stage 4. Similarly, many boys, especially the most able, do not make the progress of which they are capable because teachers do not have consistently high expectations of this group.
- The small proportion of pupils in the school who have low prior attainment make good progress from their starting points across a range of subjects. This is because teaching meets their needs.
- Following considerable improvements in the core subjects of mathematics and English, the proportions of pupils attaining a strong pass in these GCSE examinations have risen sharply. They are now above provisional national averages. Despite this, the weaker progress that pupils make during key stage 3 is preventing them from making stronger progress during their time at the school.
- Pupils in Year 7 who have fallen behind or who need help to catch up receive timely

help with their reading, writing and mathematical skills. Pupils who had low levels of literacy when they arrived in the school last year benefited from well-targeted support which helped them to catch up with their peers and access the curriculum.

- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is improving. This is, in part, due to the effective use of the pupil premium funding. Leaders are starting to see the impact of their actions on disadvantaged pupils' outcomes. The proportions of disadvantaged pupils in the 2018 Year 11 group who attained a standard pass in English and mathematics examinations rose sharply in comparison to the previous year. In some subjects, such as physical education and modern foreign languages, there are no differences between the progress that disadvantaged pupils make compared with other pupils nationally. However, in some subjects, particularly science, the wide differences in progress are not closing quickly enough.
- The majority of pupils with SEND are making good progress across the curriculum. Staff have a secure understanding of their needs and provide targeted support that is effective. Where progress is less strong, it is improving because of leaders' effective actions.
- The small number of pupils who attend alternative provision succeed with their personal learning targets and are supported well to move on to appropriate education, skills and training opportunities.
- According to the school's information, in 2018, the proportion of pupils who moved on to further education, training or employment at the end of Year 11 was above historic national averages.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- In 2018, students did not make the overall progress that the school expected of them. Students' progress in some of their A-level subjects, such as psychology and sociology, was weak. Students' outcomes in academic courses in the sixth form have not consistently matched the good outcomes in vocational subjects. Therefore, outcomes require improvement.
- Teaching in the sixth form has lacked a sense of urgency. Teachers of academic subjects have not had high enough expectations of what students are capable of achieving, particularly those who have underachieved during their time in the main school. As a result, the teaching of academic courses in the sixth form has tended to perpetuate, rather than halt, the trend of underachievement that has been established in the main school during recent years. Despite this, there are signs that the teaching of academic courses is improving, and this has impacted positively on students' achievement in the 2018 examinations.
- Teachers of vocational courses are skilled at helping pupils to achieve well. They provide students with the individual support that is required for them to excel and achieve well. Students have achieved particularly well in computer use and business studies.
- The sixth-form enrichment programme supports the development of students' employability, personal, social and independent learning skills in Year 12. It is less effective in consolidating these skills in Year 13.

- Leaders have a clear understanding of the quality of education provided in the sixth form and have taken effective action to secure improvements. For example, in previous years, too many students dropped out of the courses that they had started. This year, student retention is in line with historic national averages. This is because leaders have ensured that students benefit from effective advice and guidance and choose the appropriate courses for their aspirations.
- Students make strong progress on applied study programmes. In 2018, students' progress on these courses was well above the national average.
- Students benefit from careers advice, information and guidance that are tailored to their individual needs and aspirations. The majority of students leave the school to study at their first choice of university because the school supports them well.
- Students are provided with effective pastoral care and guidance. They are kept safe and they are prepared well for the risks and experiences that they may face as they enter adulthood. Leaders have good strategies to support students' emotional health and well-being. The school prepares students well for life in modern Britain.
- Students who have not achieved a grade 4 in English and/or mathematics at GCSE make better progress than pupils nationally in securing this grade.
- Students who spoke to inspectors enthuse about the sixth form. One student told us, 'If you need help and express this, the school goes out of its way for you.'

School details

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| Unique reference number | 104960 |
| Local authority | Sefton |
| Inspection number | 10046095 |

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

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| 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 | 1,326 |
| Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes | 194 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Christopher Manning |
| Headteacher | Brendan McLoughlin |
| Telephone number | 0151 330 3366 |
| Website | www.maricourt.net/ |
| Email address | admin.MaricourtHigh@schools.sefton.gov.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 27–28 January 2015 |

Information about this school

- Maricourt Catholic High School is a voluntary aided, larger-than-average, mixed comprehensive for pupils aged 11 to 19.
- The last section 48 inspection took place in February 2015.
- The school is a local authority school. Responsibilities are delegated to the local governing body.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision for all of their education.
- The school draws on support from the local authority and diocese.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across a number of different subjects. They also observed form time. Some observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at the work of pupils currently in the school, both in classrooms and through a detailed work scrutiny.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, representatives from the governing body, a representative from the diocese, middle leaders, pastoral leaders, teachers and pupils.
- A broad base of documentation was scrutinised, including: the school's past performance information; information about current pupils' progress; leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plan; governing body minutes; school policies; SEND reports; individual pupil case studies; reports commissioned by the school; and individual subject improvement plans.
- The views of parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account. There were 77 responses to this questionnaire and the same number of free-text comments. There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils, but inspectors gathered their views by speaking with them in lessons, around the school and in formal meetings. Staff views were also considered as part of the inspection evidence, including the 51 responses to Ofsted's online survey.

Inspection team

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
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| Stephanie Gill | Ofsted Inspector |
| Emma Gregory | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| John Leigh | Ofsted Inspector |

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